

STORIES BY JULIANA HORATIA EWING



WITH PICTURES BY
EDNA COOKE

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"THIS IS RED BERGAMOT. SMELL IT."

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CHILDREN'S ROOM
J FICTION
COPY

Illustrations

"This is Red Bergamot. Smell it."	<i>Frontispiece</i>
Away went Lollo . . . away went Spitfire, mad with the rapture of the race.	<i>Facing page 24</i>
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JACKANAPES

"If I might buffet for my love, or bound my horse for her favors, I could lay on like a butcher, and sit like a Jackanapes, never off."

King Henry V., Act v. Scene 2.

CHAPTER I

Last noon beheld them full of lusty life,
Last eve in Beauty's circle proudly gay,
The midnight brought the signal sound of strife,
The morn the marshalling in arms—the day
Battle's magnificently stern array!
The thunder-clouds close o'er it, which when rent
The earth is covered thick with other clay,
Which her own clay shall cover, heaped and pent,
Rider and horse,—friend, foe,—in one red burial blent.

Their praise is hymn'd by loftier harps than mine
Yet one would I select from that proud throng.

To thee, to thousands, of whom each
And one as all a ghastly gap did make
In his own kind and kindred, whom to teach
Forgetfulness were mercy for their sake;
The Archangel's trump, not glory's, must awake
Those whom they thirst for.

BYRON.

Two Donkeys and the Geese lived on the Green, and all other residents of any social standing lived in houses round it. The houses had no names. Everybody's address was "The Green," but the Postman and the people of the place knew where each family lived. As to the rest of the world, what has one to do with the rest of the world when he is safe at home on his own

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'Goose Green? Moreover, if a stranger did come on any lawful business, he might ask his way at the shop.

Most of the inhabitants were long-lived, early deaths (like that of the little Miss Jessamine) being exceptional; and most of the old people were proud of their age, especially the sexton, who would be ninety-nine come Martinmas, and whose father remembered a man who had carried arrows, as a boy, for the battle of Flodden Field. The Gray Goose and the big Miss Jessamine were the only elderly persons who kept their ages secret. Indeed, Miss Jessamine never mentioned anyone's age, or recalled the exact year in which anything had happened. She said that she had been taught that it was bad manners to do so "in a mixed assembly."

The Gray Goose also avoided dates; but this was partly because her brain, though intelligent, was not mathematical, and computation was beyond her. She never got farther than "last Michaelmas," "the Michaelmas before that," and "the Michaelmas before the Michaelmas before that." After this her head, which was small, became confused, and she said, "Ga, ga!" and changed the subject.

But she remembered the little Miss Jessamine, the Miss Jessamine with the "conspicuous" hair. Her aunt, the big Miss Jessamine, said it was her only fault. The hair was clean, was abundant, was glossy; but do what you would with it, it never looked quite like other people's. And at church, after Saturday night's wash, it shone like the best brass fender after a spring cleaning. In short, it was conspicuous, which does not become a young woman, especially in church.

Those were worrying times altogether, and the Green was used for strange purposes. A political meeting was held on it with the village Cobbler in the chair, and a speaker who came by

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stage-coach from the town, where they had wrecked the bakers' shops, and discussed the price of bread. He came a second time by stage; but the people had heard something about him in the meanwhile, and they did not keep him on the Green. They took him to the pond and tried to make him swim, which he could not do, and the whole affair was very disturbing to all quiet and peaceable fowls. After which another man came, and preached sermons on the Green, and a great many people went to hear him; for those were "trying times," and folk ran hither and thither for comfort. And then what did they do but drill the ploughboys on the Green, to get them ready to fight the French, and teach them the goose-step! However, that came to an end at last; for Bony was sent to St. Helena, and the ploughboys were sent back to the plough.

Everybody lived in fear of Bony in those days, especially the naughty children, who were kept in order during the day by threats of "Bony shall have you," and who had nightmares about him in the dark. They thought he was an Ogre in a cocked hat. The Gray Goose thought he was a Fox, and that all the men of England were going out in red coats to hunt him. It was no use to argue the point; for she had a very small head, and when one idea got into it there was no room for another.

Besides, the Gray Goose never saw Bony, nor did the children, which rather spoilt the terror of him, so that the Black Captain became more effective as a Bogy with hardened offenders. The Gray Goose remembered *his* coming to the place perfectly. What he came for she did not pretend to know. It was all part and parcel of the war and bad times. He was called the Black Captain, partly because of himself and partly because of his wonderful black mare. Strange stories were afloat of how far and how fast that mare could go when her master's hand was on her

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mane and he whispered in her ear. Indeed, some people thought we might reckon ourselves very lucky if we were not out of the frying-pan into the fire, and had not got a certain well-known Gentleman of the Road to protect us against the French. But that, of course, made him none the less useful to the Johnsons' Nurse when the little Miss Johnsons were naughty.

"You leave off crying this minnit, Miss Jane, or I'll give you right away to that horrid wicked officer. Jemima! just look out o' the windy, if you please, and see if the Black Cap'n's a-coming with his horse to carry away Miss Jane."

And there, sure enough, the Black Captain strode by, with his sword clattering as if it did not know whose head to cut off first. But he did not call for Miss Jane that time. He went on to the Green, where he came so suddenly upon the eldest Master Johnson, sitting in a puddle on purpose, in his new nankeen skeleton suit, that the young gentleman thought judgment had overtaken him at last, and abandoned himself to the howlings of despair. His howls were redoubled when he was clutched from behind and swung over the Black Captain's shoulder; but in five minutes his tears were staunch, and he was playing with the officer's accoutrements. All of which the Gray Goose saw with her own eyes, and heard afterwards that that bad boy had been whining to go back to the Black Captain ever since, which showed how hardened he was, and that nobody but Bonaparte himself could be expected to do him any good.

But those were "trying times." It was bad enough when the pickle of a large and respectable family cried for the Black Captain; when it came to the little Miss Jessamine crying for him, one felt that the sooner the French landed and had done with it, the better.

The big Miss Jessamine's objection to him was that he was

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a soldier; and this prejudice was shared by all the Green. "A soldier," as the speaker from the town had observed, "is a blood-thirsty, unsettled sort of a rascal, that the peaceable, home-loving, bread-winning citizen can never conscientiously look on as a brother till he has beaten his sword into a ploughshare and his spear into a pruning-hook."

On the other hand, there was some truth in what the Postman (an old soldier) said in reply,—that the sword has to cut a way for us out of many a scrape into which our bread-winners get us when they drive their ploughshares into fallows that don't belong to them. Indeed, whilst our most peaceful citizens were prosperous chiefly by means of cotton, of sugar, and of the rise and fall of the money-market (not to speak of such salable matters as opium, firearms, and "black ivory"), disturbances were apt to arise in India, Africa, and other outlandish parts, where the fathers of our domestic race were making fortunes for their families. And for that matter, even on the Green, we did not wish the military to leave us in the lurch, so long as there was any fear that the French were coming.*

To let the Black Captain have little Miss Jessamine, however, was another matter. Her aunt would not hear of it; and then, to crown all, it appeared that the Captain's father did not think the young lady good enough for his son. Never was any affair more clearly brought to a conclusion.

But those were "trying times;" and one moonlight night, when the Gray Goose was sound asleep upon one leg, the Green was

* "The political men declare war, and generally for commercial interests; but when the nation is thus embroiled with its neighbors, the soldier . . . draws the sword at the command of his country. . . . One word as to thy comparison of military and commercial persons. What manner of men be they who have supplied the Caffres with the fire-arms and ammunition to maintain their savage and deplorable wars? Assuredly they are not military. . . . Cease then, if thou wouldst be counted among the just, to vilify soldiers."—W. NAPIER, *Lieutenant-General*, November, 1851.

rudely shaken under her by the thud of a horse's feet. "Ga, ga!" said she, putting down the other leg and running away.

By the time she returned to her place not a thing was to be seen or heard. The horse had passed like a shot. But next day there was hurrying and skurrying and cackling at a very early hour, all about the white house with the black beams, where Miss Jessamine lived. And when the sun was so low and the shadows so long on the grass that the Gray Goose felt ready to run away at the sight of her own neck, little Miss Jane Johnson and her "particular friend" Clarinda sat under the big oak-tree on the Green, and Jane pinched Clarinda's little finger till she found that she could keep a secret, and then she told her in confidence that she had heard from Nurse and Jemima that Miss Jessamine's niece had been a very naughty girl, and that that horrid wicked officer had come for her on his black horse and carried her right away.

"Will she never come back?" asked Clarinda.

"Oh, no!" said Jane, decidedly. "Bony never brings people back."

"Not never no more?" sobbed Clarinda, for she was weak-minded, and could not bear to think that Bony never, never let naughty people go home again.

Next day Jane had heard more.

"He has taken her to a Green."

"A Goose Green?" asked Clarinda.

"No. A Gretna Green. Don't ask so many questions, child," said Jane, who, having no more to tell, gave herself airs.

Jane was wrong on one point. Miss Jessamine's niece did come back, and she and her husband were forgiven. The Gray Goose remembered it well; it was Michaelmas-tide, the Michaelmas before the Michaelmas before the Michaelmas—but, ga, ga!

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What does the date matter? It was autumn, harvest-time, and everybody was so busy prophesying and praying about the crops, that the young couple wandered through the lanes, and got blackberries for Miss Jessamine's celebrated crab and blackberry jam, and made guys of themselves with bryony-wreaths, and not a soul troubled his head about them, except the children and the Postman. The children dogged the Black Captain's footsteps (his bubble reputation as an Ogre having burst), clamoring for a ride on the black mare. And the Postman would go somewhat out of his postal way to catch the Captain's dark eye, and show that he had not forgotten how to salute an officer.

But they were "trying times." One afternoon the black mare was stepping gently up and down the grass, with her head at her master's shoulder, and as many children crowded on to her silky back as if she had been an elephant in a menagerie; and the next afternoon she carried him away, sword and *sabre-tache* clattering war music at her side, and the old Postman waiting for them, rigid with salutation, at the four cross-roads.

War and bad times! It was a hard winter; and the big Miss Jessamine and the little Miss Jessamine (but she was Mrs. Black-Captain now) lived very economically, that they might help their poorer neighbors. They neither entertained nor went into company; but the young lady always went up the village as far as the *George and Dragon*, for air and exercise, when the London Mail * came in.

One day (it was a day in the following June) it came in earlier than usual, and the young lady was not there to meet it.

* "The Mail Coach it was that distributed over the face of the land, like the opening of apocalyptic vials, the heart-shaking news of Trafalgar, of Salamanca, of Vittoria, of Waterloo. . . . The grandest chapter of our experience, within the whole Mail-Coach service, was on those occasions when we went down from London with the news of victory. Five years of life it was worth paying down for the privilege of an outside place."—DE QUINCEY.

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But a crowd soon gathered round the *George and Dragon*, gaping to see the Mail Coach dressed with flowers and oak-leaves, and the guard wearing a laurel wreath over and above his royal livery. The ribbons that decked the horses were stained and flecked with the warmth and foam of the pace at which they had come, for they had pressed on with the news of Victory.

Miss Jessamine was sitting with her niece under the oak-tree on the Green, when the Postman put a newspaper silently into her hand. Her niece turned quickly,—

“Is there news?”

“Don’t agitate yourself, my dear,” said her aunt. “I will read it aloud, and then we can enjoy it together: a far more comfortable method, my love, than when you go up the village, and come home out of breath, having snatched half the news as you run.”

“I am all attention, dear aunt,” said the little lady, clasping her hands tightly on her lap.

Then Miss Jessamine read aloud,—she was proud of her reading,—and the old soldier stood at attention behind her, with such a blending of pride and pity on his face as it was strange to see:—

“DOWNING STREET,
“June 22, 1815, 1 A. M.”

“That’s one in the morning,” gasped the Postman; “beg your pardon, mum.”

But though he apologized, he could not refrain from echoing here and there a weighty word: “Glorious victory,”—“Two hundred pieces of artillery,”—“Immense quantity of ammunition,”—and so forth.

“The loss of the British Army upon this occasion has unfortunately been most severe. It had not been possible to make out a return of the killed and wounded when Major Percy left headquarters. The names of the officers killed and wounded, as far as can be collected, are annexed.

“I have the honor—”

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"The list, aunt! Read the list!"

"My love—my darling—let us go in and——"

"No. Now! Now!"

To one thing the supremely afflicted are entitled in their sorrow,—to be obeyed; and yet it is the last kindness that people commonly will to them. But Miss Jessamine did. Steadying her voice as best she might, she read on; and the old soldier stood bare-headed to hear that first Roll of the Dead at Waterloo, which began with the Duke of Brunswick and ended with Ensign Brown.* Five-and-thirty British Captains fell asleep that day on the Bed of Honor, and the Black Captain slept among them.

.
There are killed and wounded by war, of whom no returns reach Downing Street.

Three days later, the Captain's wife had joined him, and Miss Jessamine was kneeling by the cradle of their orphan son, a purple-red morsel of humanity, with conspicuously golden hair.

"Will he live, Doctor?"

"Live? God bless my soul, ma'am! Look at him! The young Jackanapes!"

CHAPTER II

And he wandered away and away
With Nature, the dear old Nurse.
LONGFELLOW.

THE Gray Goose remembered quite well the year that Jackanapes began to walk, for it was the year that the speckled hen for the first time in all her motherly life got out of patience when

* "Brunswick's fated chieftain" fell at Quatre-Bras, the day before Waterloo; but this first (very imperfect) list, as it appeared in the newspapers of the day, did begin with his name and end with that of an Ensign Brown.

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she was sitting. She had been rather proud of the eggs,—they were unusually large,—but she never felt quite comfortable on them; and whether it was because she used to get cramps and go off the nest, or because the season was bad, or what, she never could tell; but every egg was addled but one, and the one that did hatch gave her more trouble than any chick she had ever reared.

It was a fine, downy, bright yellow little thing, but it had a monstrous big nose and feet, and such an ungainly walk as she knew no other instance of in her well-bred and high-stepping family. And as to behavior, it was not that it was either quarrelsome or moping, but simply unlike the rest. When the other chicks hopped and cheeped on the Green about their mother's feet, this solitary yellow brat went waddling off on its own responsibility, and do or cluck what the speckled hen would, it went to play in the pond.

It was off one day as usual, and the hen was fussing and fuming after it, when the Postman, going to deliver a letter at Miss Jessamine's door, was nearly knocked over by the good lady herself, who, bursting out of the house with her cap just off and her bonnet just not on, fell into his arms, crying:

"Baby! Baby! Jackanapes! Jackanapes!"

If the Postman loved anything on earth, he loved the Captain's yellow-haired child; so, propping Miss Jessamine against her own door-post, he followed the direction of her trembling fingers and made for the Green.

Jackanapes had had the start of the Postman by nearly ten minutes. The world—the round, green world with an oak-tree on it—was just becoming very interesting to him. He had tried, vigorously but ineffectually, to mount a passing pig, the last time he was taken out walking; but then he was encumbered with

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a nurse. Now he was his own master, and might, by courage and energy, become the master of that delightful downy, dumpy, yellow thing that was bobbing along over the green grass in front of him. Forward! Charge! He aimed well, and grabbed it, but only to feel the delicious downiness and dumpiness slipping through his fingers as he fell upon his face. "Quawk!" said the yellow thing, and wobbled off sideways. It was this oblique movement that enabled Jackanapes to come up with it, for it was bound for the pond, and therefore obliged to come back into line. He failed again from top-heaviness, and his prey escaped sideways as before, and, as before, lost ground in getting back to the direct road to the pond.

And at the pond the Postman found them both,—one yellow thing rocking safely on the ripples that lie beyond duck-weed, and the other washing his draggled frock with tears because he, too, had tried to sit upon the pond and it wouldn't hold him.

CHAPTER III

If studious, copie fair what time hath blurred,
Redeem truth from his jawes: if souldier,
Chase brave employments with a naked sword
Throughout the world. Fool not; for all may have,
If they dare try, a glorious life, or grave.

In brief, acquit thee bravely: play the man.
Look not on pleasures as they come, but go.
Defer not the least vertue: life's poore span
Make not an ell, by trifling in thy woe.
If thou do ill, the joy fades, not the pains.
If well: the pain doth fade, the joy remains.

GEORGE HERBERT.

YOUNG Mrs. Johnson, who was a mother of many, hardly knew which to pity more,—Miss Jessamine for having her little ways and her antimacassars rumpled by a young Jackanapes, or the boy himself for being brought up by an old maid.

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Oddly enough, she would probably have pitied neither, had Jackanapes been a girl. (One is so apt to think that what works smoothest, works to the highest ends, having no patience for the results of friction.) That father in God who bade the young men to be pure and the maidens brave, greatly disturbed a member of his congregation, who thought that the great preacher had made a slip of the tongue.

"That the girls should have purity, and the boys courage, is what you would say, good father?"

"Nature has done that," was the reply; "I meant what I said."

In good sooth, a young maid is all the better for learning some robuster virtues than maidenliness and not to move the antima-cassars; and the robuster virtues require some fresh air and freedom. As, on the other hand, Jackanapes (who had a boy's full share of the little beast and the young monkey in his natural composition) was none the worse, at his tender years, for learning some maidenliness,—so far as maidenliness means decency, pity, unselfishness, and pretty behavior.

And it is due to him to say that he was an obedient boy, and a boy whose word could be depended on, long before his grandfather the General came to live at the Green.

He was obedient; that is, he did what his great-aunt told him. But—oh, dear! oh, dear!—the pranks he played, which it had never entered into her head to forbid!

It was when he had just been put into skeletons (frocks never suited him) that he became very friendly with Master Tony Johnson, a younger brother of the young gentleman who sat in the puddle on purpose. Tony was not enterprising, and Jackanapes led him by the nose. One summer's evening they were out late, and Miss Jessamine was becoming anxious, when Jackanapes

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presented himself with a ghastly face all besmirched with tears. He was unusually subdued.

"I'm afraid," he sobbed,—“if you please, I'm very much afraid that Tony Johnson's dying in the churchyard.”

Miss Jessamine was just beginning to be distracted, when she smelt Jackanapes.

"You naughty, naughty boys! Do you mean to tell me that you've been smoking?"

"Not pipes," urged Jackanapes; "upon my honor, aunty, not pipes. Only cigars like Mr. Johnson's! and only made of brown paper with a very, very little tobacco from the shop inside them."

Whereupon Miss Jessamine sent a servant to the churchyard, who found Tony Johnson lying on a tombstone, very sick, and having ceased to entertain any hopes of his own recovery.

If it could be possible that any "unpleasantness" could arise between two such amiable neighbors as Miss Jessamine and Mrs. Johnson, and if the still more incredible paradox can be that ladies may differ over a point on which they are agreed, that point was the admitted fact that Tony Johnson was "delicate;" and the difference lay chiefly in this: Mrs. Johnson said that Tony was delicate,—meaning that he was more finely strung, more sensitive, a properer subject for pampering and petting, than Jackanapes, and that, consequently, Jackanapes was to blame for leading Tony into scrapes which resulted in his being chilled, frightened, or (most frequently) sick. But when Miss Jessamine said that Tony Johnson was delicate, she meant that he was more puling, less manly, and less healthily brought up than Jackanapes, who, when they got into mischief together, was certainly not to blame because his friend could not get wet, sit a kicking donkey, ride in the giddy-go-round, bear the noise of a cracker, or smoke brown paper with impunity, as he could.

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Not that there was ever the slightest quarrel between the ladies. It never even came near it, except the day after Tony had been so very sick with riding Bucephalus in the giddy-go-round. Mrs. Johnson had explained to Miss Jessamine that the reason Tony was so easily upset was the unusual sensitiveness (as a doctor had explained it to her) of the nervous centers in her family—"Fiddlestick!" So Mrs. Johnson understood Miss Jessamine to say; but it appeared that she only said "Treaclestick!" which is quite another thing, and of which Tony was undoubtedly fond.

It was at the Fair that Tony was made ill by riding on Bucephalus. Once a year the Goose Green became the scene of a carnival. First of all, carts and caravans were rumbling up all along, day and night. Jackanapes could hear them as he lay in bed, and could hardly sleep for speculating what booths and whirligigs he should find fairly established when he and his dog Spitfire went out after breakfast. As a matter of fact, he seldom had to wait so long for news of the Fair. The Postman knew the window out of which Jackanapes' yellow head would come, and was ready with his report.

"Royal Theayter, Master Jackanapes, in the old place, but be careful o' them seats, sir; they're rickettier than ever. Two sweets and a ginger beer under the oak-tree, and the Flying Boats is just a-coming along the road."

No doubt it was partly because he had already suffered severely in the Flying Boats that Tony collapsed so quickly in the giddy-go-round. He only mounted Bucephalus (who was spotted, and had no tail) because Jackanapes urged him, and held out the ingenious hope that the round-and-round feeling would very likely cure the up-and-down sensation. It did not, however, and Tony tumbled off during the first revolution.

Jackanapes was not absolutely free from qualms; but having

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once mounted the Black Prince, he stuck to him as a horseman should. During the first round he waved his hat, and observed with some concern that the Black Prince had lost an ear since last Fair; at the second, he looked a little pale, but sat upright, though somewhat unnecessarily rigid; at the third round he shut his eyes. During the fourth his hat fell off, and he clasped his horse's neck. By the fifth he had laid his yellow head against the Black Prince's mane, and so clung anyhow till the hobby-horses stopped, when the proprietor assisted him to alight, and he sat down rather suddenly and said he had enjoyed it very much.

The Gray Goose always ran away at the first approach of the caravans, and never came back to the Green till there was nothing left of the Fair but footmarks and oyster-shells. Running away was her pet principle; the only system, she maintained, by which you can live long and easily and lose nothing. If you run away when you see danger, you can come back when all is safe. Run quickly, return slowly, hold your head high, and gabble as loud as you can, and you'll preserve the respect of the Goose Green to a peaceful old age. Why should you struggle and get hurt, if you can lower your head and swerve, and not lose a feather? Why in the world should anyone spoil the pleasure of life, or risk his skin, if he can help it?

“What's the use?”
Said the Goose.”

Before answering which one might have to consider what world, which life, and whether his skin were a goose-skin; but the Gray Goose's head would never have held all that.

Grass soon grows over footprints, and the village children took the oyster-shells to trim their gardens with; but the year after Tony rode Bucephalus there lingered another relic of Fair-time

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in which Jackanapes was deeply interested. "The Green" proper was originally only part of a straggling common, which in its turn merged into some wilder waste land where gypsies sometimes squatted if the authorities would allow them, especially after the annual Fair. And it was after the Fair that Jackanapes, out rambling by himself, was knocked over by the Gypsy's son riding the Gypsy's red-haired pony at breakneck pace across the common.

Jackanapes got up and shook himself, none the worse except for being heels over head in love with the red-haired pony. What a rate he went at! How he spurned the ground with his nimble feet! How his red coat shone in the sunshine! And what bright eyes peeped out of his dark forelock as it was blown by the wind!

The Gypsy boy had had a fright, and he was willing enough to reward Jackanapes for not having been hurt, by consenting to let him have a ride.

"Do you mean to kill the little fine gentleman, and swing us all on the gibbet, you rascal?" screamed the Gypsy mother, who came up just as Jackanapes and the pony set off.

"He would get on," replied her son. "It'll not kill him. He'll fall on his yellow head, and it's as tough as a cocoanut."

But Jackanapes did not fall. He stuck to the red-haired pony as he had stuck to the hobby-horse; but, oh, how different the delight of this wild gallop with flesh and blood! Just as his legs were beginning to feel as if he did not feel them, the Gypsy boy cried, "Lollo!" Round went the pony so unceremoniously that with as little ceremony Jackanapes clung to his neck; and he did not properly recover himself before Lollo stopped with a jerk at the place where they had started.

"Is his name Lollo?" asked Jackanapes, his hand lingering in the wiry mane.

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"Yes."

"What does Lollo mean?"

"Red."

"Is Lollo your pony?"

"No. My father's." And the Gypsy boy led Lollo away.

At the first opportunity Jackanapes stole away again to the common. This time he saw the Gypsy father, smoking a dirty pipe.

"Lollo is your pony, isn't he?" said Jackanapes.

"Yes."

"He's a very nice one."

"He's a racer."

"You don't want to sell him, do you?"

"Fifteen pounds," said the Gypsy father; and Jackanapes sighed and went home again. That very afternoon he and Tony rode the two donkeys; and Tony managed to get thrown, and even Jackanapes' donkey kicked. But it was jolting, clumsy work after the elastic swiftness and the dainty mischief of the red-haired pony.

A few days later, Miss Jessamine spoke very seriously to Jackanapes. She was a good deal agitated as she told him that his grandfather the General was coming to the Green, and that he must be on his very best behavior during the visit. If it had been feasible to leave off calling him Jackanapes and to get used to his baptismal name of Theodore before the day after to-morrow (when the General was due), it would have been satisfactory. But Miss Jessamine feared it would be impossible in practice, and she had scruples about it on principle. It would not seem quite truthful, although she had always most fully intended that he should be called Theodore when he had outgrown the ridiculous appropriateness of his nickname. The fact was that he had

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not outgrown it, but he must take care to remember who was meant when his grandfather said Theodore.

Indeed, for that matter, he must take care all along.

"You are apt to be giddy, Jackanapes," said Miss Jessamine.

"Yes, aunt," said Jackanapes, thinking of the hobby-horses.

"You are a good boy, Jackanapes. Thank God, I can tell your grandfather that. An obedient boy, an honorable boy, and a kind-hearted boy. But you are—in short, you *are* a boy, Jackanapes. And I hope," added Miss Jessamine, desperate with the results of experience, "that the General knows that boys will be boys."

What mischief could be foreseen, Jackanapes promised to guard against. He was to keep his clothes and his hands clean, to look over his catechism, not to put sticky things in his pockets, to keep that hair of his smooth ("It's the wind that blows it, aunty," said Jackanapes—"I'll send by the coach for some bear's-grease," said Miss Jessamine, tying a knot in her pocket-handkerchief), not to burst in at the parlor door, not to talk at the top of his voice, not to crumple his Sunday frill, and to sit quite quiet during the sermon, to be sure to say "sir" to the General, to be careful about rubbing his shoes on the door-mat, and to bring his lesson-books to his aunt at once that she might iron down the dogs'-ears. The General arrived; and for the first day all went well, except that Jackanapes' hair was as wild as usual, for the hair-dresser had no bear's-grease left. He began to feel more at ease with his grandfather, and disposed to talk confidentially with him, as he did with the Postman. All that the General felt, it would take too long to tell; but the result was the same. He was disposed to talk confidentially with Jackanapes.

"Mons'ous pretty place this," he said, looking out of the

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lattice on to the Green, where the grass was vivid with sunset and the shadows were long and peaceful.

"You should see it in Fair-week, sir," said Jackanapes, shaking his yellow mop, and leaning back in his one of the two Chippendale arm-chairs in which they sat.

"A fine time that, eh?" said the General, with a twinkle in his left eye (the other was glass).

Jackanapes shook his hair once more. "I enjoyed this last one the best of all," he said. "I'd so much money."

"By George, it's not a common complaint in these bad times. How much had ye?"

"I'd two shillings. A new shilling aunty gave me, and elevenpence I had saved up, and a penny from the Postman,—*sir!*" added Jackanapes with a jerk, having forgotten it.

"And how did ye spend it,—*sir?*" inquired the General.

Jackanapes spread his ten fingers on the arms of his chair, and shut his eyes that he might count the more conscientiously.

"Watch-stand for aunty, threepence. Trumpet for myself, twopence; that's fivence. Gingernuts for Tony, twopence, and a mug with a Grenadier on for the Postman, fourpence; that's elevenpence. Shooting-gallery a penny; that's a shilling. Giddy-go-round, a penny; that's one and a penny. Treating Tony, one and twopence. Flying Boats (Tony paid for himself), a penny, one and threepence. Shooting-gallery again, one and fourpence; Fat Woman, a penny, one and fivence. Giddy-go-round again, one and sixpence. Shooting-gallery, one and sevenpence. Treating Tony, and then he wouldn't shoot, so I did, one and eightpence. Living Skeleton, a penny—no, Tony treated me, the Living Skeleton doesn't count. Skittles, a penny, one and ninepence. Mermaid (but when we got inside she was dead), a penny, one and tenpence. Theater, a penny (Priscilla Partington, or

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the Green Lane Murder. A beautiful young lady, sir, with pink cheeks and a real pistol); that's one and elevenpence. Ginger beer, a penny (*I was so thirsty!*), two shillings. And then the Shooting-gallery man gave me a turn for nothing, because, he said, I was a real gentleman, and spent my money like a man."

"So you do, sir, so you do!" cried the General. "Egad, sir, you spent it like a prince. And now I suppose you've not got a penny in your pocket?"

"Yes, I have," said Jackanapes. "Two pennies. They are saving up." And Jackanapes jingled them with his hand.

"You don't want money except at Fair-times, I suppose?" said the General.

Jackanapes shook his mop.

"If I could have as much as I want, I should know what to buy," said he.

"And how much do you want, if you could get it?"

"Wait a minute, sir, till I think what twopence from fifteen pounds leaves. Two from nothing you can't, but borrow twelve. Two from twelve, ten, and carry one. Please remember ten, sir, when I ask you. One from nothing you can't, borrow twenty. One from twenty nineteen, and carry one. One from fifteen, fourteen. Fourteen pounds nineteen and—what did I tell you to remember?"

"Ten," said the General.

"Fourteen pounds nineteen shillings and tenpence, then, is what I want," said Jackanapes.

"God bless my soul! What for?"

"To buy Lollo with. Lollo means red, sir. The Gypsy's red-haired pony, sir. Oh, he *is* beautiful! You should see his coat in the sunshine! You should see his mane! You should see his

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tail! Such little feet, sir, and they go like lightning! Such a dear face, too, and eyes like a mouse! But he's a racer, and the Gypsy wants fifteen pounds for him."

"If he's a racer you couldn't ride him. Could you?"

"No—o, sir, but I can stick to him. I did the other day."

"The deuce you did! Well, I'm fond of riding myself; and if the beast is as good as you say, he might suit me."

"You're too tall for Lollo, I think," said Jackanapes, measuring his grandfather with his eye.

"I can double up my legs, I suppose. We'll have a look at him to-morrow."

"Don't you weigh a good deal?" asked Jackanapes.

"Chiefly waistcoats," said the General, slapping the breast of his military frock-coat. "We'll have the little racer on the Green the first thing in the morning. Glad you mentioned it, grandson; glad you mentioned it."

The General was as good as his word. Next morning the Gypsy and Lollo, Miss Jessamine, Jackanapes and his grandfather and his dog Spitfire, were all gathered at one end of the Green in a group, which so aroused the innocent curiosity of Mrs. Johnson, as she saw it from one of her upper windows, that she and the children took their early promenade rather earlier than usual. The General talked to the Gypsy, and Jackanapes fondled Lollo's mane, and did not know whether he should be more glad or miserable if his grandfather bought him.

"Jackanapes!"

"Yes, sir!"

"I've bought Lollo, but I believe you were right. He hardly stands high enough for me. If you can ride him to the other end of the Green, I'll give him to you."

How Jackanapes tumbled on to Lollo's back he never knew.

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He had just gathered up the reins when the Gypsy father took him by the arm.

"If you want to make Lollo go fast, my little gentleman——"

"I can make him go!" said Jackanapes; and, drawing from his pocket the trumpet he had bought in the Fair, he blew a blast both loud and shrill.

Away went Lollo, and away went Jackanapes' hat. His golden hair flew out, an aureole from which his cheeks shone red and distended with trumpeting. Away went Spitfire, mad with the rapture of the race and the wind in his silky ears. Away went the geese, the cocks, the hens, and the whole family of Johnson. Lucy clung to her mamma, Jane saved Emily by the gathers of her gown, and Tony saved himself by a somersault.

The Gray Goose was just returning when Jackanapes and Lollo rode back, Spitfire panting behind.

"Good, my little gentleman, good!" said the Gypsy. "You were born to the saddle. You've the flat thigh, the strong knee, the wiry back, and the light caressing hand; all you want is to learn the whisper. Come here!"

"What was that dirty fellow talking about, grandson?" asked the General.

"I can't tell you, sir. It's a secret."

They were sitting in the window again, in the two Chippendale arm-chairs, the General devouring every line of his grandson's face, with strange spasms crossing his own.

"You must love your aunt very much, Jackanapes?"

"I do, sir," said Jackanapes, warmly.

"And whom do you love next best to your aunt?"

The ties of blood were pressing very strongly on the General himself, and perhaps he thought of Lollo. But love is not bought



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AWAY WENT LOLLO . . . AWAY WENT SPITFIRE, MAD WITH THE RAPTURE OF THE RACE.

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in a day, even with fourteen pounds nineteen shillings and tenpence. Jackanapes answered quite readily, "The Postman."

"Why the Postman?"

"He knew my father," said Jackanapes, "and he tells me about him and about his black mare. My father was a soldier, a brave soldier. He died at Waterloo. When I grow up I want to be a soldier, too."

"So you shall, my boy; so you shall."

"Thank you, grandfather. Aunty doesn't want me to be a soldier, for fear of being killed."

"Bless my life! Would she have you get into a feather-bed and stay there? Why, you might be killed by a thunderbolt if you were a butter-merchant!"

"So I might. I shall tell her so. What a funny fellow you are, sir! I say, do you think my father knew the Gypsy's secret? The Postman says he used to whisper to his black mare."

"Your father was taught to ride, as a child, by one of those horsemen of the East who swoop and dart and wheel about a plain like swallows in autumn. Grandson! love me a little, too. I can tell you more about your father than the Postman can."

"I do love you," said Jackanapes. "Before you came I was frightened. I'd no notion you were so nice."

"Love me always, boy, whatever I do or leave undone. And—God help me!—whatever you do or leave undone, I'll love you. There shall never be a cloud between us for a day; no, sir, not for an hour. We're imperfect enough, all of us—we needn't be so bitter; and life is uncertain enough at its safest—we needn't waste its opportunities. God bless my soul! Here sit I, after a dozen battles and some of the worst climates in the world, and by yonder lych gate lies your mother, who didn't move five miles, I suppose,

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from your aunt's apron-strings,—dead in her teens; my golden-haired daughter, whom I never saw!"

Jackanapes was terribly troubled.

"Don't cry, grandfather," he pleaded, his own blue eyes round with tears. "I will love you very much, and I will try to be very good. But I should like to be a soldier."

"You shall, my boy; you shall. You've more claims for a commission than you know of. Cavalry, I suppose; eh, ye young Jackanapes? Well, well; if you live to be an honor to your country, this old heart shall grow young again with pride for you; and if you die in the service of your country—egad, sir, it can but break for ye!"

And beating the region which he said was all waistcoats, as if they stifled him, the old man got up and strode out on to the Green.

CHAPTER IV

Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.—JOHN XV. 13.

TWENTY and odd years later the Gray Goose was still alive, and in full possession of her faculties, such as they were. She lived slowly and carefully, and she lived long. So did Miss Jessamine; but the General was dead.

He had lived on the Green for many years, during which he and the Postman saluted each other with a punctiliousness that it almost drilled one to witness. He would have completely spoiled Jackanapes if Miss Jessamine's conscience would have let him; otherwise he somewhat dragooned his neighbors, and was as positive about parish matters as a ratepayer about the army. A stormy-tempered, tender-hearted soldier, irritable with the suf-

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fering of wounds of which he never spoke, whom all the village followed to his grave with tears.

The General's death was a great shock to Miss Jessamine, and her nephew stayed with her for some little time after the funeral. Then he was obliged to join his regiment, which was ordered abroad.

One effect of the conquest which the General had gained over the affections of the village was a considerable abatement of the popular prejudice against "the military." Indeed, the village was now somewhat importantly represented in the army. There was the General himself, and the Postman, and the Black Captain's tablet in the church, and Jackanapes, and Tony Johnson, and a Trumpeter.

Tony Johnson had no more natural taste for fighting than for riding, but he was as devoted as ever to Jackanapes. And that was how it came about that Mr. Johnson bought him a commission in the same cavalry regiment that the General's grandson (whose commission had been given him by the Iron Duke) was in; and that he was quite content to be the butt of the mess where Jackanapes was the hero; and that when Jackanapes wrote home to Miss Jessamine, Tony wrote with the same purpose to his mother,—namely, to demand her congratulations that they were on active service at last, and were ordered to the front. And he added a postscript, to the effect that she could have no idea how popular Jackanapes was, nor how splendidly he rode the wonderful red charger which he had named after his old friend Lollo.

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"Sound Retire!"

A Boy Trumpeter, grave with the weight of responsibilities and accoutrements beyond his years, and stained so that his own

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mother would not have known him, with the sweat and dust of battle, did as he was bid; and then, pushing his trumpet pettishly aside, adjusted his weary legs for the hundredth time to the horse which was a world too big for him, and muttering, "'Tain't a pretty tune," tried to see something of this his first engagement before it came to an end.

Being literally in the thick of it, he could hardly have seen less or known less of what happened in that particular skirmish if he had been at home in England. For many good reasons,—including dust and smoke, and that what attention he dared distract from his commanding officer was pretty well absorbed by keeping his hard-mouthed troop-horse in hand, under pain of execration by his neighbors in the *mêlée*. By and by, when the newspapers came out, if he could get a look at one before it was thumbed to bits, he would learn that the enemy had appeared from ambush in overwhelming numbers, and that orders had been given to fall back, which was done slowly and in good order, the men fighting as they retired.

Born and bred on the Goose Green, the youngest of Mr. Johnson's gardener's numerous offspring, the boy had given his family "no peace" till they let him "go for a soldier" with Master Tony and Master Jackanapes. They consented at last, with more tears than they shed when an elder son was sent to jail for poaching; and the boy was perfectly happy in his life, and full of *esprit de corps*. It was this which had been wounded by having to sound retreat for "the young gentlemen's regiment," the first time he served with it before the enemy; and he was also harassed by having completely lost sight of Master Tony. There had been some hard fighting before the backward movement began, and he had caught sight of him once, but not since. On the other hand, all the pulses of his village pride had been stirred by one or two

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visions of Master Jackanapes whirling about on his wonderful horse. He had been easy to distinguish, since an eccentric blow had bared his head without hurting it; for his close golden mop of hair gleamed in the hot sunshine as brightly as the steel of the sword flashing round it.

Of the missiles that fell pretty thickly, the Boy Trumpeter did not take much notice. First, one can't attend to everything, and his hands were full; secondly, one gets used to anything; thirdly, experience soon teaches one, in spite of proverbs, how very few bullets find their billet. Far more unnerving is the mere suspicion of fear or even of anxiety in the human mass around you. The Boy was beginning to wonder if there were any dark reason for the increasing pressure, and whether they would be allowed to move back more quickly, when the smoke in front lifted for a moment, and he could see the plain, and the enemy's line some two hundred yards away. And across the plain between them, he saw Master Jackanapes galloping alone at the top of Lollo's speed, their faces to the enemy, his golden head at Lollo's ear.

But at this moment noise and smoke seemed to burst out on every side; the officer shouted to him to sound *Retire!* and between trumpeting and bumping about on his horse, he saw and heard no more of the incidents of his first battle.

Tony Johnson was always unlucky with horses, from the days of the giddy-go-round onwards. On this day—of all days in the year—his own horse was on the sick list, and he had to ride an inferior, ill-conditioned beast, and fell off that, at the very moment when it was a matter of life or death to be able to ride away. The horse fell on him, but struggled up again, and Tony managed to keep hold of it. It was in trying to remount that he discovered, by helplessness and anguish, that one of his legs was

crushed and broken, and that no feat of which he was master would get him into the saddle. Not able even to stand alone, awkwardly, agonizingly, unable to mount his restive horse, his life was yet so strong within him! And on one side of him rolled the dust and smoke-cloud of his advancing foes, and on the other, that which covered his retreating friends.

He turned one piteous gaze after them, with a bitter twinge, not of reproach, but of loneliness; and then, dragging himself up by the side of his horse, he turned the other way and drew out his pistol, and waited for the end. Whether he waited seconds or minutes he never knew, before someone gripped him by the arm.

"Jackanapes! God bless you! It's my left leg. If you could get me on——"

It was like Tony's luck that his pistol went off at his horse's tail, and made it plunge; but Jackanapes threw him across the saddle.

"Hold on anyhow, and stick your spur in. I'll lead him. Keep your head down; they're firing high."

And Jackanapes laid his head down—to Lollo's ear.

It was when they were fairly off, that a sudden upspringing of the enemy in all directions had made it necessary to change the gradual retirement of our force into as rapid a retreat as possible. And when Jackanapes became aware of this, and felt the lagging and swerving of Tony's horse, he began to wish he had thrown his friend across his own saddle and left their lives to Lollo.

When Tony became aware of it, several things came into his head: first, that the dangers of their ride for life were now more than doubled; second, that if Jackanapes and Lollo were not burdened with him they would undoubtedly escape; third, that Jackanapes' life was infinitely valuable, and his—Tony's—was not; fourth, that this, if he could seize it, was the supremest of all the

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moments in which he had tried to assume the virtues which Jackanapes had by nature; and that if he could be courageous and unselfish now——

He caught at his own reins and spoke very loud,—

“Jackanapes! It won’t do. You and Lollo must go on. Tell the fellows I gave you back to them with all my heart. Jackanapes, if you love me, leave me!”

There was a daffodil light over the evening sky in front of them, and it shone strangely on Jackanapes’ hair and face. He turned with an odd look in his eyes that a vainer man than Tony Johnson might have taken for brotherly pride. Then he shook his mop, and laughed at him.

“*Leave you?* To save my skin? No, Tony, not to save my soul!”

CHAPTER V

MR. VALIANT *summoned. His Will. His last Words.*

Then said he, “I am going to my Father’s. . . . My Sword I give to him that shall succeed me in my Pilgrimage, and my Courage and Skill to him that can get it.” . . . And as he went down deeper, he said, “Grave, where is thy Victory?”

So he passed over, and all the Trumpets sounded for him on the other side.

BUNYAN: *Pilgrim’s Progress.*

COMING out of a hospital tent, at headquarters, the surgeon cannoned against, and rebounded from, another officer,—a sallow man, not young, with a face worn more by ungentle experiences than by age, with weary eyes that kept their own counsel, iron-gray hair, and a mustache that was as if a raven had laid its wings across his lips and sealed them.

“Well?”

“Beg pardon, Major. Didn’t see you. Oh, compound fracture and bruises. But it’s all right; he’ll pull through.”

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"Thank God!"

It was probably an involuntary expression; for prayer and praise were not much in the Major's line, as a jerk of the surgeon's head would have betrayed to an observer. He was a bright little man, with his feelings showing all over him, but with gallantry and contempt of death enough for both sides of his profession; who took a cool head, a white handkerchief, and a case of instruments, where other men went hot-blooded with weapons, and who was the biggest gossip, male or female, of the regiment. Not even the Major's taciturnity daunted him.

"Didn't think he'd as much pluck about him as he has. He'll do all right if he doesn't fret himself into a fever about poor Jackanapes."

"Whom are you talking about?" asked the Major, hoarsely.

"Young Johnson. He——"

"What about Jackanapes?"

"Don't you know? Sad business. Rode back for Johnson, and brought him in; but, monstrous ill luck, hit as they rode. Left lung——"

"Will he recover?"

"No. Sad business. What a frame—what limbs—what health—and what good looks! Finest young fellow——"

"Where is he?"

"In his own tent," said the surgeon, sadly.

The Major wheeled and left him.

• • • • • • •
"Can I do anything else for you?"

"Nothing, thank you. Except—— Major! I wish I could get you to appreciate Johnson."

"This is not an easy moment, Jackanapes."

"Let me tell you, sir—*he* never will—that if he could have

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driven me from him, he would be lying yonder at this moment, and I should be safe and sound."

The Major laid his hand over his mouth, as if to keep back a wish he would have been ashamed to utter.

"I've known old Tony from a child. He's a fool on impulse, a good man and a gentleman in principle. And he acts on principle, which it's not every—— Some water, please! Thank you, sir. It's very hot, and yet one's feet get uncommonly cold. Oh, thank you, thank you. He's no fire-eater, but he has a trained conscience and a tender heart, and he'll do his duty when a braver and more selfish man might fail you. But he wants encouragement; and when I'm gone——"

"He shall have encouragement. You have my word for it. Can I do nothing else?"

"Yes, Major. A favor."

"Thank you, Jackanapes."

"Be Lollo's master, and love him as well as you can. He's used to it."

"Wouldn't you rather Johnson had him?"

The blue eyes twinkled in spite of mortal pain.

"Tony *rides* on principle, Major. His legs are bolsters, and will be to the end of the chapter. I couldn't insult dear Lollo; but if you don't care——"

"While I live—which will be longer than I desire or deserve—Lollo shall want nothing but—you. I have too little tenderness for—— My dear boy, you're faint. Can you spare me for a moment?"

"No, stay—— Major!"

"What? What?"

"My head drifts so—if you wouldn't mind."

"Yes! Yes!"

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"Say a prayer by me. Out loud, please; I am getting deaf."

"My dearest Jackanapes—my dear boy——"

"One of the Church Prayers—Parade Service, you know——"

"I see. But the fact is—God forgive me, Jackanapes!—I'm a very different sort of fellow to some of you youngsters. Look here, let me fetch——"

But Jackanapes' hand was in his, and it would not let go. There was a brief and bitter silence.

"'Pon my soul, I can only remember the little one at the end."

"Please," whispered Jackanapes.

Pressed by the conviction that what little he could do it was his duty to do, the Major, kneeling, bared his head, and spoke loudly, clearly, and very reverently,—

"The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ——"

Jackanapes moved his left hand to his right one, which still held the Major's—

"The love of God——"

And with that—Jackanapes died.

CHAPTER VI

JACKANAPES' death was sad news for the Goose Green, a sorrow just qualified by honorable pride in his gallantry and devotion. Only the Cobbler dissented; but that was his way. He said he saw nothing in it but foolhardiness and vainglory. They might both have been killed, as easy as not; and then where would ye have been? A man's life was a man's life, and one life was as good as another. No one would catch him throwing his away. And, for that matter, Mrs. Johnson could spare a child a great deal better than Miss Jessamine.

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But the parson preached Jackanapes' funeral sermon on the text, "Whosoever will save his life shall lose it, and whosoever will lose his life for My sake shall find it;" and all the village went and wept to hear him.

Nor did Miss Jessamine see her loss from the Cobbler's point of view. On the contrary, Mrs. Johnson said she never to her dying day should forget how, when she went to condole with her, the old lady came forward, with gentlewomanly self-control, and kissed her, and thanked God that her dear nephew's effort had been blessed with success, and that this sad war had made no gap in her friend's large and happy home-circle.

"But she's a noble, unselfish woman," sobbed Mrs. Johnson, "and she taught Jackanapes to be the same; and that's how it is that my Tony has been spared to me. And it must be sheer goodness in Miss Jessamine, for what can she know of a mother's feelings? And I'm sure most people seem to think that if you've a large family you don't know one from another any more than they do, and that a lot of children are like a lot of store apples,—if one's taken it won't be missed."

Lollo—the first Lollo, the Gypsy's Lollo—very aged, draws Miss Jessamine's bath-chair slowly up and down the Goose Green in the sunshine.

The ex-Postman walks beside him, which Lollo tolerates to the level of his shoulder. If the Postman advances any nearer to his head, Lollo quickens his pace; and were the Postman to persist in the injudicious attempt, there is, as Miss Jessamine says, no knowing what might happen.

In the opinion of the Goose Green, Miss Jessamine has borne her troubles "wonderfully." Indeed, to-day, some of the less delicate and less intimate of those who see everything from the

upper windows say (well, behind her back) that "the old lady seems quite lively with her military beaux again."

The meaning of this is, that Captain Johnson is leaning over one side of her chair, while by the other bends a brother officer who is staying with him, and who has manifested extraordinary interest in Lollo. He bends lower and lower, and Miss Jessamine calls to the Postman to request Lollo to be kind enough to stop, while she is fumbling for something which always hangs by her side, and has got entangled with her spectacles.

It is a twopenny trumpet, bought years ago in the village fair; and over it she and Captain Johnson tell, as best they can, between them, the story of Jackanapes' ride across the Goose Green; and how he won Lollo—the Gypsy's Lollo—the racer Lollo—dear Lollo—faithful Lollo—Lollo the never vanquished—Lollo the tender servant of his old mistress. And Lollo's ears twitch at every mention of his name.

Their hearer does not speak, but he never moves his eyes from the trumpet; and when the tale is told, he lifts Miss Jessamine's hand and presses his heavy black mustache in silence to her trembling fingers.

The sun, setting gently to his rest, embroiders the somber foliage of the oak-tree with threads of gold. The Gray Goose is sensible of an atmosphere of repose, and puts up one leg for the night. The grass glows with a more vivid green, and, in answer to a ringing call from Tony, his sisters fluttering over the daisies in pale-hued muslins, come out of their ever-open door, like pretty pigeons from a dovecote.

And if the good gossips' eyes do not deceive them, all the Miss Johnsons and both the officers go wandering off into the lanes, where bryony wreaths still twine about the brambles.

.

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A sorrowful story, and ending badly?

Nay, Jackanapes, for the End is not yet.

A life wasted that might have been useful?

Men who have died for men, in all ages, forgive the thought!

There is a heritage of heroic example and noble obligation, not reckoned in the Wealth of Nations, but essential to a nation's life; the contempt of which, in any people, may, not slowly, mean even its commercial fall.

Very sweet are the uses of prosperity, the harvests of peace and progress, the fostering sunshine of health and happiness, and length of days in the land.

But there be things—oh, sons of what has deserved the name of Great Britain, forget it not!—"the good of" which and "the use of" which are beyond all calculation of worldly goods and earthly uses: things such as Love, and Honor, and the Soul of Man, which cannot be bought with a price, and which do not die with death. And they who would fain live happily ever after should not leave these things out of the lessons of their lives.

MARY'S MEADOW

CHAPTER I

MOTHER is always trying to make us love our neighbors as ourselves.

She does so despise us for greediness, or grudging or snatching, or not sharing what we have got, or taking the best and leaving the rest, or helping ourselves first, or pushing forward, or praising Number One, or being Dogs in the Manger, or anything selfish. And we cannot bear her to despise us!

We despise being selfish, too; but very often we forget. Besides, it is sometimes rather difficult to love your neighbor as yourself when you want a thing very much; and Arthur says he believes it is particularly difficult if it is your next-door-neighbor, and that that is why Father and the Old Squire quarreled about the footpath through Mary's Meadow.

The Old Squire is not really his name, but that is what people call him. He is very rich. His place comes next to ours, and it is much bigger, and he has quantities of fields, and Father has only got a few; but there are two fields beyond Mary's Meadow which belong to Father, though the Old Squire wanted to buy them. Father would not sell them, and he says he has a right-of-way through Mary's Meadow to go to his fields, but the Old Squire says he has nothing of the kind, and that is what they quarreled about.

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Arthur says if you quarrel, and are too grown-up to punch each other's heads, you go to law; and if going to law doesn't make it up, you appeal. They went to law, I know, for Mother cried about it; and I suppose it did not make it up, for the Old Squire appealed.

After that he used to ride about all day on his gray horse, with Saxon, his yellow bull-dog, following him, to see that we did not trespass on Mary's Meadow. I think he thought that if we children were there, Saxon would frighten us, for I do not suppose he knew that we knew him. But Saxon used often to come with the Old Squire's Scotch Gardener to see our gardener, and when they were looking at the wall fruit, Saxon used to come snuffing after us.

He is the nicest dog I know. He looks very savage, but he is only very funny. His lower jaw sticks out, which makes him grin, and some people think he is gnashing his teeth with rage. We think it looks as if he were laughing—like Mother Hubbard's dog, when she brought home his coffin, and he wasn't dead—but it really is only the shape of his jaw. I loved Saxon the first day I saw him, and he likes me, and licks my face. But what he likes best of all are Bath Oliver Biscuits.

One day the Scotch Gardener saw me feeding him, and he pulled his red beard, and said, "Ye do weel to mak' hay while the sun shines, Saxon, my man. There's sma' sight o' young leddies and sweet cakes at hame for ye!" And Saxon grinned, and wagged his tail, and the Scotch Gardener touched his hat to me, and took him away.

The Old Squire's Weeding Woman is our nursery-maid's aunt. She is not very old, but she looks so, because she has lost her teeth, and is bent nearly double. She wears a large hood, and carries a big basket, which she puts down outside the nursery

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door when she comes to tea with Bessy. If it is a fine afternoon, and we are gardening, she lets us borrow the basket, and then we play at being weeding women in each other's gardens.

She tells Bessy about the Old Squire. She says—"He do be a real old skinflint, the Old Zquire a be!" But she thinks it—"zim as if 'twas having ne'er a wife nor child for to keep the natur in 'un, so his heart do zim to shrivel, like they walnuts But-ler tells us of as a zets down for desart. The Old Zquire he mostly eats ne'er a one now's teeth be so bad. But a counts them every night when's desart's done. And a keeps 'em till the karnels be mowldy, and a keeps 'em till they be dry, and a keeps 'em till they be dust; and when the karnels is dust, a cracks aal the lot of 'em when desart's done, zo's no one mayn't have no good of they walnuts, since they be no good to he."

Arthur can imitate the Weeding Woman exactly, and he can imitate the Scotch Gardener, too. Chris (that is Christopher, our youngest brother), is very fond of "The Zquire and the Walnuts." He gets nuts, or anything, like shells or bits of flower-pots, that will break, and something to hit with, and when Arthur comes to "*The karnels is dust*," Chris smashes everything before him, shouting, "*A cracks aal the lot of 'em*" and then he throws the bits all over the place, with "*They be no good to he*."

Father laughed very much when he heard Arthur do the Weeding Woman, and Mother could not help laughing, too; but she did not like it, because she does not like us to repeat servants' gossip.

The Weeding Woman is a great gossip. She gossips all the time she is having her tea, and it is generally about the Old Squire. She used to tell Bessy that his flowers bloomed themselves to death, and the fruit rotted on the walls, because he would let nothing be picked, and gave nothing away, except now and then

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a grand present of fruit to Lady Catherine, for which the old lady returned no thanks, but only a rude message to say that his peaches were over-ripe, and he had better have sent the grapes to the Infirmary. Adela asked—"Why is the Old Squire so kind to Lady Catherine?" and Father said—"Because we are so fond of Lords and Ladies in this part of the country." I thought he meant the lords and ladies in the hedges, for we are very fond of them. But he didn't. He meant real lords and ladies.

There are splendid lords and ladies in the hedges of Mary's Meadow. I never can make up my mind when I like them best. In April and May, when they have smooth plum-colored coats and pale green cowls, and push up out of last year's dry leaves, or in August and September, when their hoods have fallen away, and their red berries shine through the dusty grass and nettles that have been growing up round them all the summer out of the ditch.

Flowers were one reason for our wanting to go to Mary's Meadow. Another reason was the nightingale. There was one that used always to sing there, and Mother had made us a story about it.

We are very fond of fairy books, and one of our greatest favorites is Bechstein's "As Pretty as Seven." It has very nice pictures, and we particularly like "The Man in the Moon, and How He Came There;" but the story doesn't end well, for he came there by gathering sticks on Sunday, and then scoffing about it, and he has been there ever since. But Mother made us a new fairy tale about the nightingale in Mary's Meadow being the naughty woodcutter's only child, who was turned into a little brown bird that lives on in the woods, and sits on a tree on summer nights, and sings to its father up in the moon.

But after our father and the Old Squire went to law, Mother

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told us we must be content with hearing the nightingale from a distance. We did not really know about the lawsuit then, we only understood that the Old Squire was rather crosser than usual; and we rather resented being warned not to go into Mary's Meadow, especially as Father kept saying we had a perfect right so to do. I thought that Mother was probably afraid of Saxon being set at us, and of course I had no fears about him. Indeed, I used to wish that it could happen that the Old Squire, riding after me as full of fury as King Padella in the "Rose and the Ring," might set Saxon on me, as the lions were let loose to eat the Princess Rosalba. "Instead of devouring her with their great teeth, it was with kisses they gobbled her up. They licked her pretty feet, they nuzzled their noses in her lap," and she put her arms "round their tawny necks and kissed them." Saxon gobbles us with kisses, and nuzzles his nose, and we put our arms round his tawny neck. What a surprise it would be to the Old Squire to see him! And then I wondered if my feet were as pretty as Rosalba's, and I thought they were, and I wondered if Saxon would lick them, supposing that by any possibility it could ever happen that I should be barefoot in Mary's Meadow at the mercy of the Old Squire and his bull-dog.

One does not, as a rule, begin to go to bed by letting down one's hair, and taking off one's shoes and stockings. But one night I was silly enough to do this, just to see if I looked (in the mirror) at all like the picture of Rosalba in "The Rose and the Ring." I was trying to see my feet as well as my hair, when I heard Arthur jumping the three steps in the middle of the passage between his room and mine. I had only just time to spring into the window seat, and tuck my feet under me, when he gave a hasty knock, and bounced in with his telescope in his hand.

"Oh, Mary," he cried, "I want you to see the Old Squire, with

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a great-coat over his evening clothes, and a squosh hat, marching up and down Mary's Meadow."

And he pulled up my blind, and threw open the window, and arranged the telescope for me.

It was a glorious night. The moon was rising round and large out of the mist, and dark against its brightness I could see the figure of the Old Squire pacing the pathway over Mary's Meadow.

Saxon was not there; but on a slender branch of a tree in the hedgerow sat the nightingale, singing to comfort the poor, lonely old Man in the Moon.

CHAPTER II

LADY CATHERINE is Mother's aunt by marriage, and Mother is one of the few people she is not rude to.

She is very rude, and yet she is very kind, especially to the poor. But she does kind things so rudely, that people now and then wish that she would mind her own business instead. Father says so, though Mother would say that that is gossip. But I think sometimes that Mother is thinking of Aunt Catherine when she tells us that in kindness it is not enough to be good to others, one should also learn to be gracious.

Mother thought she was very rude to *her* once, when she said, quite out loud, that Father is very ill-tempered, and that, if Mother had not the temper of an angel, the house could never hold together. Mother was very angry, but Father did not mind. He says our house will hold together much longer than most houses, because he swore at the workmen, and went to law with the builder for using dirt instead of mortar, so the builder had to pull down what was done wrong, and do it right; and Father says

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he knows he has a bad temper, but he does not mean to pull the house over our heads at present, unless he has to get bricks out to heave at Lady Catherine if she becomes quite unbearable.

We do not like dear Father to be called bad-tempered. He comes home cross sometimes, and then we have to be very quiet, and keep out of the way; and sometimes he goes out rather cross, but not always. It was what Chris said about that that pleased Lady Catherine so much.

It was one day when Father came home cross, and was very much vexed to find us playing about the house. Arthur had got a new adventure book, and he had been reading to us about the West Coast of Africa, and niggers, and tom-toms, and "going Fantee;" and James gave him a lot of old corks out of the pantry, and let him burn them in a candle. It rained, and we could not go out; so we all blacked our faces with burnt cork, and played at the West Coast in one of the back passages, and at James being the captain of a slave ship, because he tried to catch us when we beat the tom-toms too near him when he was cleaning the plate, to make him give us rouge and whitening to tattoo with.

Dear Father came home rather earlier than we expected, and rather cross. Chris did not hear the front door, because his ears were pinched up with tying curtain rings on to them, and just at that minute he shouted, "I go Fantee!" and tore his pinafore right up the middle, and burst into the front hall with it hanging in two pieces by the armholes, his eyes shut, and a good grab of James's rouge powder smudged on his nose, yelling and playing the tom-tom on what is left of Arthur's drum.

Father was very angry indeed, and Chris was sent to bed, and not allowed to go down to dessert; and Lady Catherine was dining at our house, so he missed her.

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Next time she called, and saw Chris, she asked him why he had not been at dessert that night. Mother looked at Chris, and said, "Why was it, Chris? Tell Aunt Catherine." Mother thought he would say "Because I tore my pinafore, and made a noise in the front hall." But he smiled, the grave way Chris does, and said, "Because Father came home cross." And Lady Catherine was pleased, but Mother was vexed.

I am quite sure Chris meant no harm, but he does say very funny things. Perhaps it is because his head is rather large for his body, with some water having got into his brain when he was very little, so that we have to take great care of him. And though he does say very odd things, very slowly, I do not think anyone of us tries harder to be good.

I remember once Mother had been trying to make us forgive each other's trespasses, and Arthur would say that you cannot *make* yourself feel kindly to them that trespass against you; and Mother said if you make yourself do right, then at last you get to feel right; and it was very soon after this that Harry and Christopher quarreled, and would not forgive each other's trespasses in the least, in spite of all that I could do to try and make peace between them.

Chris went off in the sulks, but after a long time I came upon him in the toy-cupboard, looking rather pale and very large-headed, and winding up his new American top, and talking to himself.

When he talks to himself he mutters, so I could only just hear what he was saying, and he said it over and over again:

"Dos first and feels afterwards."

"What are you doing, Chris?" I asked.

"I'm getting ready my new top to give to Harry. *Dos first and feels afterwards.*"

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"Well," I said, "Christopher, you *are* a good boy."

"I should like to punch his head," said Chris—and he said it in just the same sing-song tone—"but I'm getting the top ready. *Dos first and feels afterwards.*"

And he went on winding and muttering.

Afterwards he told me that the "feels" came sooner than he expected. Harry wouldn't take his top, and they made up their quarrel.

Christopher is very simple, but sometimes we think he is also a little sly. He can make very wily excuses about things he does not like.

He does not like Nurse to hold back his head and wash his face; and at last one day she let him go downstairs with a dirty face, and then complained to Mother. So Mother asked Chris why he was so naughty about having his face washed, and he said, quite gravely, "I do think it would be *such* pity if the water got into my head again by accident." Mother did not know he had ever heard about it, but she said, "Oh, Chris! Chris! that's one of your excuses." And he said, "It's not my '*scusis*. She lets a good deal get in—at my ears—and lather, too."

But, with all his whimsical ways, Lady Catherine is devoted to Christopher. She likes him far better than any one of us, and he is very fond of her; and they say quite rude things to each other all along. And Father says it is very lucky, for if she had not been so fond of Chris, and so ready to take him, too, Mother would never have been persuaded to leave us when Aunt Catherine took them to the South of France.

Mother had been very unwell for a long time. She has so many worries, and Dr. Solomon said she ought to avoid worry, and Aunt Catherine said worries were killing her, and Father said "Pshaw!" and Aunt Catherine said "Care killed the cat,"

and that a cat has nine lives, and a woman has only one; and then Mother got worse, and Aunt Catherine wanted to take her abroad, and she wouldn't go; and then Christopher was ill, and Aunt Catherine said she would take him, too, if only Mother would go with her; and Dr. Solomon said it might be the turning-point of his health, and Father said, "the turning-point which way?" but he thanked Lady Catherine, and they didn't quarrel; and so Mother yielded, and it was settled that they should go.

Before they went, Mother spoke to me, and told me I must be a Little Mother to the others whilst she was away. She hoped we should all try to please Father, and to be unselfish with each other; but she expected me to try far harder than the others, and never to think of myself at all, so that I might fill her place whilst she was away. So I promised to try, and I did.

We missed Christopher sadly. And Saxon missed him. The first time Saxon came to see us after Mother and Chris went away, we told him all about it, and he looked very sorry. Then we said that he should be our brother in Christopher's stead, whilst Chris was away; and he looked very much pleased, and wagged his tail, and licked our faces all round. So we told him to come and see us very often.

He did not, but we do not think it was his fault. He is chained up so much.

One day Arthur and I were walking down the road outside the Old Squire's stables, and Saxon smelt us, and we could hear him run and rattle his chain, and he gave deep, soft barks.

Arthur laughed. He said, "Do you hear Saxon, Mary? Now I dare say the Old Squire thinks he smells tramps and wants to bite them. He doesn't know that Saxon smells his new sister and brother, and wishes he could go out walking with them in Mary's Meadow."

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CHAPTER III

NOTHING comforted us so much whilst Mother and Chris were away as being allowed to play in the library.

We were not usually allowed to be there so often, but when we asked Father he gave us leave to amuse ourselves there at the time when Mother would have had us with her, provided that we did not bother him or hurt the books. We did not hurt the books, and in the end we were allowed to go there as much as we liked.

We have plenty of books of our own, and we have new ones very often: on birthdays and at Christmas. Sometimes they are interesting, and sometimes they are disappointing. Most of them have pretty pictures. It was because we had been rather unlucky for some time, and had had disappointing ones on our birthdays, that Arthur said to me, "Look here, Mary, I'm not going to read any books now but grown-up ones, unless it is an Adventure Book. I'm sick of books for young people, there's so much *stuff* in them."

We call it *stuff* when there seems to be going to be a story and it comes to nothing but talk; and we call it *stuff* when there is a very interesting picture, and you read to see what it is about, and the reading does not tell you, or tells you wrong.

Both Arthur and Christopher had had disappointments in their books on their birthdays.

Arthur jumped at his book at first, because there were Japanese pictures in it, and Uncle Charley had just been staying with us, and had brought beautiful Japanese pictures with him, and had told us Japanese fairy tales, and they were as good as Bechstein. So Arthur was full of Japan.

The most beautiful picture of all was of a stork, high up in a tall, tall pine tree, and the branches of the pine tree, and the

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cones, and the pine needles were most beautifully drawn; and there was a nest with young storks in it, and behind the stork and the nest and the tall pine the sun was blazing with all his rays. And Uncle Charley told us the story to it, and it was called "the Nest of the Stork."

So when Arthur saw a stork standing among pine needles in his new book he shouted with delight, though the pine needles were rather badly done, with thick strokes. But presently he said, "It's not nearly so good a stork as Uncle Charley's. And where's the stem of the pine? It looks as if the stork were on the ground and on the top of the pine tree, too, and there's no nest. And there's no sun. And, oh! Mary, what do you think is written under it? '*Crane and Water-reeds.*' Well, I do call that a sell!"

Christopher's disappointment was quite as bad. Mother gave him a book with very nice pictures, particularly of beasts. The chief reason she got it for him was that there was such a very good picture of a toad, and Chris is so fond of toads. For months he made friends with one in the garden. It used to crawl away from him, and he used to creep after it, talking to it, and then it used to half begin to crawl up the garden wall, and stand so, on its hind legs, and let Chris rub its wrinkled back. The toad in the picture was exactly like Christopher's toad, and he ran about the house with the book in his arms begging us to read him the story about Dear Toady.

We were all busy but Arthur, and he said, "I want to go on with my water-wheel." But Mother said, "Don't be selfish, Arthur." And he said, "I forgot. All right, Chris; bring me the book." So they went and sat in the conservatory, not to disturb anyone. But very soon they came back, Chris crying, and saying, "It couldn't be the right one, Arthur;" and Arthur frowning,

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and saying, "It *is* the right story; but it's *stuff*. I'll tell you what that book's good for, Chris. To paint the pictures. And you've got a new paint-box." So Mother said, "What's the matter?" And Arthur said, "Chris thinks I haven't read him the right story to his Toad Picture. But I have, and what do you think it's about? It's about the silliest little girl you can imagine—a regular mawk of a girl—and a frog. Not a toad, but a F. R. O. G. frog! A regular hop, skip, jumping frog!"

Arthur hopped round the room, but Chris cried bitterly. So Arthur ran up to him, and kissed him, and said, "Don't cry, old chap. I'll tell you what I'll do. You get Mary to cut out a lot of the leaves of your book that have no pictures, and that will make it like a real scrap-book; and then I'll give you a lot of my scraps and pictures to paste over what's left of the stories, and you'll have such a painting-book as you never had in all your life before."

So we did. And Arthur was very good, for he gave Chris pictures that I know he prized, because Chris liked them. But the very first picture he gave him was the "Crane and Water-reeds."

I thought it so good of Arthur to be so nice with Chris that I wished I could have helped him over his water-wheel. He had put Japan out of his head since the disappointment, and spent all his play-time in making mills and machinery. He did grind some corn into flour once, but it was not at all white. He said that was because the bran was left in. But it was not only bran in Arthur's flour. There was a good deal of sand, too, from his millstones being made of sandstone, which he thought would not matter. But it grinds off.

Down in the valley, below Mary's Meadow, runs the Ladybrook, which turns the old water-wheel of Mary's Mill. It is a very picturesque old mill, and Mother has made beautiful sketches

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of it. She caught the last cold she got before going abroad with sketching it—the day we had a most delightful picnic there, and went about in the punt. And from that afternoon Arthur made up his mind that his next mill should be a water mill.

The reason I am no good at helping Arthur about his mills is that I am stupid about machinery; and I was so vexed not to help him, that when I saw a book in the library which I thought would do so, I did not stop to take it out, for it was in four very large volumes, but ran off at once to tell Arthur.

He said, "What *is* the matter, Mary?"

I said, "Oh, Arthur! I've found a book that will tell you all about mills; and it is the nicest smelling book in the Library."

"The nicest *smelling*? What's that got to do with mills?"

"Nothing, of course. But it's bound in russia, and I am so fond of the smell of russia. But that's nothing. It's a Miller's Dictionary, and it is in four huge volumes, 'with plates.' I should think you could look out all about every kind of mill there ever was a miller to."

"If the plates give sections and diagrams"—Arthur began, but I did not hear the rest, for he started off for the library at once, and I ran after him.

But when we got Miller's Dictionary on the floor, how he did tease me! For there was nothing about mills or millers in it. It was a Gardener's and Botanist's Dictionary, by Philip Miller; and the plates were plates of flowers, very truly drawn, like the pine tree in Uncle Charley's Jap. picture. There were some sections, too, but they were sections of green-houses, not of any kinds of mills or machinery.

The odd thing was that it turned out a kind of help to Arthur after all. For we got so much interested in it that it roused us up about our gardens. We are all very fond of flowers, I most

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of all. And at last Arthur said he thought that miniature mills were really rather humbugging things, and it would be much easier and more useful to build a cold frame to keep choice auri-culas and *half-hardies* in.

When we took up our gardens so hotly, Harry and Adela took up theirs, and we did a great deal, for the weather was fine.

We were surprised to find that the Old Squire's Scotch Gardener knew Miller's Gardener's Dictionary quite well. He said, "It's a gran' wurrk!" (Arthur can say it just like him.)

One day he wished he could see it, and smell the russia binding; he said he liked to feel a nice smell. Father was away, and we were by ourselves, so we invited him to the library. Saxon wanted to come in, too, but the gardener was very cross with him, and sent him out; and he sat on the mat outside and dribbled with longing to get in, and thudded his stiff tail whenever he saw anyone through the doorway.

The Scotch Gardener enjoyed himself very much, and he explained a lot of things to Arthur, and helped us to put away the Dictionary when we had done with it.

When he took up his hat to go, he gave one long look all round the library. Then he turned to Arthur (and Saxon took advantage of this to wag his way in and join the party), and said, "It's a rare privilege, the free entry of a book chamber like this. I'm hoping, young gentlemen, that you're not insensible of it?"

Then he caught sight of Saxon, and beat him out of the room with his hat.

But he came back himself to say that it might just happen that he would be glad now and again to hear what was said about this or that plant (of which he would write down the botanical name) in these noble volumes.

So we told him that if he would bring Saxon to see us pretty

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often, we would look out anything he wanted to know about in Miller's Gardener's Dictionary.

CHAPTER IV

LOOKING round the library one day, to see if I could see any more books about gardening, I found the Book of Paradise.

It is a very old book, and very queer. It has a brown leather back—not russia—and stiff little gold flowers and ornaments all the way down, where Miller's Dictionary has gold swans in crowns, and ornaments.

There are a good many old books in the library, but they are not generally very interesting—at least not to us. So when I found that though this one had a Latin name on the title page, it was written in English, and that though it seemed to be about Paradise, it was really about a garden, and quite common flowers, I was delighted, for I always have cared more for gardening and flowers than for any other amusement, long before we found Miller's Gardener's Dictionary. And the Book of Paradise is much smaller than the dictionary, and easier to hold. And I like old, queer things, and it is very old and queer.

The Latin name is "*Paradisi in sole, Paradisus terrestris*," which we do not any of us understand, though we are all learning Latin; so we call it the Book of Paradise. But the English name is—"Or a Garden of all sorts of pleasant flowers which our English ayre will permit to be noursed up;" and on the top of every page is written "The Garden of Pleasant Flowers," and it says—"Collected by John Parkinson, Apothecary of London, and the King's Herbarist, 1629."

I had to think a minute to remember who was the king then, and it was King Charles I.; so then I knew that it was Queen

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Henrietta to whom the book was dedicated. This was the dedication:—

“TO THE QUEEN’S MOST EXCELLENT MAJESTY.

“*Madame*,—Knowing your Majesty so much delighted with all the fair flowers of a Garden, and furnished with them as far beyond others as you are eminent before them; this my Work of a Garden long before this intended to be published, and but now only finished, seemed as it were destined to be first offered into your Highness’s hands as of right, challenging the propriety of Patronage from all others. Accept, I beseech your Majesty, this speaking Garden, that may inform you in all the particulars of your store as well as wants, when you cannot see any of them fresh upon the ground: and it shall further encourage him to accomplish the remainder; who in praying that your Highness may enjoy the heavenly Paradise, after many years’ fruition of this earthly, submitteth to be your Majesties,

“In all humble devotion,

“JOHN PARKINSON.”

We like queer old things like this, they are so funny! I liked the Dedication, and I wondered if the Queen’s Garden really was an Earthly Paradise, and whether she did enjoy reading John Parkinson’s book about flowers in the winter time, when her own flowers were no longer “fresh upon the ground.” And then I wondered what flowers she had, and I looked out a great many of our chief favorites, and she had several kinds of them.

We are particularly fond of Daffodils, and she had several kinds of Daffodils, from the “Primrose Peerlesse,”* “of a sweet but stuffing scent,” to “the least Daffodil of all,”† which the book says “was brought to us by a Frenchman called Francis le Vean, the honestest root-gatherer that ever came over to us.”

The Queen had Cowslips, too, though our gardener despised them when he saw them in my garden. I dug mine up in Mary’s Meadow before Father and the Old Squire went to law; but they were only common Cowslips, with one Oxlip, by good luck. In the Earthly Paradise there were “double Cowslips, one within

* *Narcissus medio lutens vulgaris*.

† *Narcissus minimus*, Parkinson. *N. minor*, Miller.

another." And they were called Hose-in-Hose. I wished I had Hose-in-Hose.

Arthur was quite as much delighted with the Book of Paradise as I. He said, "Isn't it funny to think of Queen Henrietta Maria gardening. I wonder if she went trailing up and down the walks looking like that picture of her we saw when you and I were in London with Mother about our teeth, and went to see the Loan Collection of Old Masters. I wonder if the Dwarf picked the flowers for her. I do wonder what Apothecary John Parkinson looked like when he offered his Speaking Garden into her Highnesses' hands. And what beautiful hands she had! Do you remember the picture, Mary? It was by Vandyke."

I remembered it quite well.

That afternoon the others could not amuse themselves, and wanted me to tell them a story. They do not like old stories too often, and it is rather difficult to invent new ones. Sometimes we do it by turns. We sit in a circle and one of us begins, and the next must add something, and so we go on. But that way does not make a good plot. My head was so full of the Book of Paradise that afternoon that I could not think of a story, but I said I would begin one. So I began:

"Once upon a time there was a Queen——"

"How was she dressed?" asked Adela, who thinks a good deal about dress.

"She had a beautiful dark-blue satin robe."

"Princess shape?" inquired Adela.

"No; Queen's shape," said Arthur. "Drive on, Mary."

"And lace ruffles falling back from her Highness' hands——"

"Sweet!" murmured Adela.

"And a high hat, with plumes, on her head, and——"

"A very low dwarf at her heels," added Arthur.

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"Was there really a dwarf, Mary?" asked Harry.

"There was," said I.

"Had he a hump, or was he only a plain dwarf?"

"He was a very plain dwarf," said Arthur.

"Does Arthur know the story, Mary?"

"No, Harry, he doesn't; and he oughtn't to interfere till I come to a stop."

"Beg pardon, Mary. Drive on."

"The Queen was very much delighted with all fair flowers, and she had a garden so full of them that it was called the Earthly Paradise."

There was a long-drawn and general "Oh!" of admiration.

"But though she was a Queen, she couldn't have flowers in the winter, not even in an Earthly Paradise."

"Don't you suppose she had a greenhouse, by-the-bye, Mary?" said Arthur.

"Oh, Arthur," cried Harry, "I do wish you'd be quiet: when you know it's a fairy story, and that Queens of that sort never had greenhouses or anything like we have now."

"And so the King's Apothecary and Herbarist, whose name was John Parkinson——"

"I shouldn't have thought he would have had a common name like that," said Harry.

"Bessy's name is Parkinson," said Adela.

"Well, I can't help it; his name *was* John Parkinson."

"Drive on, Mary!" said Arthur.

"And he made her a book, called the Book of Paradise, in which there were pictures and written accounts of her flowers, so that when she could not see any of them fresh upon the ground, she could read about them, and think about them, and count up how many she had."

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"Ah, but she couldn't tell. Some of them might have died in the winter," said Adela.

"Ah, but some of the others might have got little ones at their roots," said Harry. "So that would make up."

I said nothing. I was glad of the diversion, for I could not think how to go on with the story. Before I quite gave in, Harry luckily asked, "Was there a Weeding Woman in the Earthly Paradise?"

"There was," said I.

"How was she dressed?" asked Adela.

"She had a dress, the color of common earth."

"Princess shape?" inquired Arthur.

"No; Weeding Woman shape. Arthur, I wish you wouldn't——"

"All right, Mary. Drive on."

"And a little shawl, that had partly the color of grass, and partly the color of hay."

"*Hay, dear!*" interpolated Arthur, exactly imitating a well-known sigh peculiar to Bessy's aunt.

"Was her bonnet like our weeding woman's bonnet?" asked Adela, in a disappointed tone.

"Much larger," said I, "and the color of a Marigold."

Adela looked happier. "Strings the same?" she asked.

"No. One string canary color, and the other white."

"And a basket?" asked Harry.

"Yes, a basket, of course. Well, the Queen had all sorts of flowers in her garden. Some of them were natives of the country, and some of them were brought to her from countries far away, by men called Root-gatherers. There were very beautiful Daffodils in the Earthly Paradise, but the smallest of all the Daffodils——"

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"A Dwarf, like the Hunchback?" said Harry.

"The Dwarf Daffodil of all was brought to her by a man called Francis le Vean."

"That was a *much* nicer name than John Parkinson," said Harry.

"And he was the honestest Root-gatherer that ever brought foreign flowers into the Earthly Paradise."

"Then I love him!" said Harry.

CHAPTER V

ONE sometimes thinks it is very easy to be good, and then comes something which makes it very hard.

I liked being a Little Mother to the others, and almost enjoyed giving way to them. "Others first, Little Mothers afterwards," as we used to say—till the day I made up that story for them out of the Book of Paradise.

The idea of it took our fancy completely, the others as well as mine, and though the story was constantly interrupted, and never came to any real plot or end, there were no Queens, or dwarfs, or characters of any kind in all Bechstein's fairy tales, or even in Grimm, more popular than the Queen of the Blue Robe and her Dwarf, and the Honest Root-gatherer, and John Parkinson, King's Apothecary and Herbarist, and the Weeding Woman of the Earthly Paradise.

When I said, "Wouldn't it be a good new game to have an Earthly Paradise in our gardens, and to have a King's Apothecary and Herbarist to gather things and make medicine of them, and an honest Root-gatherer to divide the polyanthus plants and the bulbs when we take them up, and divide them fairly, and a Weeding Woman to work and make things tidy, and a Queen in a

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blue dress, and Saxon for the Dwarf"—the others set up such a shout of approbation that Father sent James to inquire if we imagined that he was going to allow his house to be turned into a bear-garden.

And Arthur said, "No. Tell him we're only turning it into a Speaking Garden, and we're going to turn our own gardens into an Earthly Paradise."

But I said, "Oh, James! please don't say anything of the kind. Say we're very sorry, and we will be quite quiet."

And James said, "Trust me, Miss. It would be a deal more than my place is worth to carry Master Arthur's messages to his Pa."

"I'll be the honestest Root-gatherer," said Harry. "I'll take up Dandelion roots to the very bottom and sell them to the King's Apothecary to make Dandelion tea of."

"That's a good idea of yours, Harry," said Arthur, "I shall be John Parkinson——"

"My name is Francis le Vean," said Harry.

"King's Apothecary and Herbarist," continued Arthur, disdaining the interruption. "And I'll bet you my Cloth of Gold Pansy to your Black Prince that Bessy's aunt takes three bottles of my dandelion and chamomile mixture for 'the swimmings,' bathes her eyes every morning with my elder flower lotion to strengthen the sight, and sleeps every night on my herb pillow (if Mary'll make me a flannel bag) before the week's out."

"I could make you a flannel bag," said Adela, "if Mary will make me a bonnet, so that I can be the Weeding Woman. You could make it of tissue paper, with stiff paper inside, like all those caps you made for us last Christmas, Mary, dear, couldn't you? And there is some lovely orange-colored paper, I know, and pale yellow, and white. The bonnet was Marygold-color, was

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it not? And one string canary-colored and one white. I couldn't tie them, of course, being paper; but Bessy's aunt doesn't tie her bonnet. She wears it like a helmet, to shade her eyes. I shall wear mine so, too. It will be all Marygold, won't it, dear? Front *and* crown; and the white string going back over one shoulder, and the canary string over the other. They might be pinned together behind, perhaps, if they were in my way. Don't you think so?"

I said "Yes," because if one does not say something, Adela never stops saying whatever it is she is saying, even if she has to say it two or three times over.

But I felt so cross and selfish, that if Mother *could* have known she *would* have despised me!

For the truth was, I had set my heart upon being the Weeding Woman. I thought Adela would want to be the Queen, because of the blue dress, and the plumed hat, and the lace ruffles. Besides, she likes picking flowers, but she never liked grubbing. She would not really like the Weeding Woman's work; it was the bonnet that had caught her fancy, and I found it hard to smother the vexing thought that if I had gone on dressing the Weeding Woman of the Earthly Paradise like Bessy's aunt, instead of trying to make the story more interesting by inventing a marygold bonnet with yellow and white strings for her, I might have had the part I wished to play in our new game (which certainly was of my devising), and Adela would have been better pleased to be the Queen than to be anything else.

As it was, I knew that if I asked her she would give up the Weeding Woman. Adela is very good, and she is very good-natured. And I knew, too, that it would not have cost her much. She would have given a sigh about the bonnet, and then have

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turned her whole attention to a blue robe, and how to manage the ruffles.

But even whilst I was thinking about it, Arthur said: "Of course, Mary must be the Queen, unless we could think of something else—very good—for her. If we could have thought of something, Mary, I was thinking how jolly it would be, when Mother comes home, to have had *her* for the Queen, with Chris for her Dwarf, and to give her flowers out of our Earthly Paradise."

"She would look just like a Queen," said Harry.

"In her navy blue nun's cloth and Russian lace," said Adela.

That settled the question. Nothing could be so nice as to have Mother in the game, and the plan provided for Christopher also. I had no wish to be Queen, as far as that went. Dressing up, and walking about the garden would be no fun for me. I really had looked forward to clearing away big baskets full of weeds and rubbish, and keeping our five gardens and the paths between them so tidy as they had never been kept before. And I knew the weeds would have a fine time of it with Adela, as Weeding Woman, in a tissue paper bonnet!

But one thing was more important than tidy gardens—not to be selfish.

I had been left as Little Mother to the others, and I had been lucky enough to think of a game that pleased them. If I turned selfish now, it would spoil everything.

So I said that Arthur's idea was excellent; that I had no wish to be Queen, that I thought I might, perhaps, devise another character for myself by-and-by; and that if the others would leave me alone, I would think about it whilst I was making Adela's bonnet.

The others were quite satisfied. Father says people always

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are satisfied with things in general, when they've got what they want for themselves, and I think that is true.

I got the tissue paper and the gum; resisted Adela's extreme desire to be with me and talk about the bonnet, and shut myself up in the library.

I got out the *Book of Paradise*, too, and propped it up in an armchair, and sat on a footstool in front of it, so that I could read in between whiles of making the bonnet. There is an index, so that you can look out the flowers you want to read about. It was no use our looking out flowers, except common ones, such as Harry would be allowed to get bits of out of the big garden to plant in our little gardens, when he became our Honest Root-gatherer.

I looked at the Cowslips again. I am very fond of them, and so they say, are nightingales; which is, perhaps, why that nightingale we know lives in Mary's Meadow, for it is full of cowslips.

The Queen had a great many kinds, and there are pictures of most of them. She had the Common Field Cowslip, the Primrose Cowslip, the Single Green Cowslip, Curled Cowslips, or Galigaskins, Double Cowslips, or Hose-in-Hose, and the Franticke or Foolish Cowslips, or Jackanapes on Horseback.

I did not know any of them except the Common Cowslip, but I remembered that Bessy's aunt once told me that she had a double cowslip. It was the day I was planting common ones in my garden, when our gardener despised them. Bessy's aunt despised them, too, and she said the double ones were only fit for a cottage garden. I laughed so much that I tore the canary-colored string as I was gumming it on to the bonnet, to think how I could tell her now that Cowslips are Queen's flowers, the common ones as well as the Hose-in-Hose.

Then I looked out the Honeysuckle, it was page 404, and

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there were no pictures. I began at the beginning of the chapter; this was it, and it was as funnily spelled as the preface, but I could read it.

“Chap. cv. *Periclymemum*. Honeysuckles.

“The Honisucle that groweth wilde in euery hedge, although it be very sweete, yet doe I not bring it into my garden, but let rest in his owne place, to serue their senses that trauell by it, or haue no garden.”

I had got so far when James came in. He said—“Letters, Miss.”

It was the second post, and there was a letter for me, and a book parcel; both from Mother.

Mother's letters are always delightful; and, like things she says, they often seem to come in answer to something you have been thinking about, and which you would never imagine she could know, unless she was a witch. This was *the knowing bit* in that letter:—“*Your dear father's note this morning did me more good than bottles of tonic. It is due to you, my trustworthy little daughter, to tell you of the bit that pleased me most. He says—‘The children seem to me to be behaving unusually well, and I must say, I believe the credit belongs to Mary. She seems to have a genius for keeping them amused, which luckily means keeping them out of mischief.’ Now, good Little Mother, I wonder how you yourself are being entertained? I hope the others are not presuming on your unselfishness? Anyhow, I send you a book for your own amusement when they leave you a bit of, peace and quiet. I have long been fond of it in French, and I have found an English translation with nice little pictures, and send it to you. I know you will enjoy it, because you are so fond of flowers.*”

Oh, how glad I was that I had let Adela be the Weeding

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Woman with a good grace, and could open my book parcel with a clear conscience!

I put the old book away and buried myself in the new one.

I never had a nicer. It was called "A Tour Round My Garden," and some of the little stories in it—like the Tulip Rebecca, and the Discomfited Florists—were very amusing indeed; and some were sad and pretty, like the Yellow Roses; and there were delicious bits, like the Enriched Woodman and the Connoisseur Deceived; but there was no "stuff" in it at all.

Some chapters were duller than others, and at last I got into a very dull one, about the vine, and it had a good deal of Greek in it, and we have not begun Greek.

But after the Greek, and the part about Bacchus and Anacreon (I did not care about *them*; they were not in the least like the Discomfited Florists, or the Enriched Woodman!) there came this, and I liked it the best of all:—

"At the extremity of my garden the vine extends in long porticos, through the arcades of which may be seen trees of all sorts, and foliage of all colors. There is an *azerolier* (a small medlar) which is covered in autumn with little apples, producing the richest effect. I have given away several grafts of this; far from deriving pleasure from the privation of others, I do my utmost to spread and render common and vulgar all the trees and plants that I prefer; it is as if I multiplied the pleasure and the chances of beholding them of all who, like me, really love flowers for their splendor, their grace, and their perfume. Those who, on the contrary, are jealous of their plants, and only esteem them in proportion with their conviction that no one else possesses them, do not love flowers; and be assured that it is either chance or poverty which has made them collectors of flowers, instead of being collectors of pictures, cameos, medals, or any other thing that

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might serve as an excuse for indulging in all the joys of possession, seasoned with the idea that others do not possess.

"I have even carried the vulgarisation of beautiful flowers farther than this.

"I ramble about the country near my dwelling, and seek the widest and least frequented spots. In these, after clearing and preparing a few inches of ground, I scatter the seeds of my most favorite plants, which re-sow themselves, perpetuate themselves, and multiply themselves. At this moment, whilst the fields display nothing but the common red poppy, strollers find with surprise in certain wild nooks of our country, the most beautiful double poppies, with their white, red, pink, carnation, and variegated blossoms.

"At the foot of an isolated tree, instead of the little bind-weed with its white flower, may sometimes be found the beautifully climbing convolvulus major, of all the lovely colors that can be imagined.

"Sweet peas fasten their tendrils to the bushes, and cover them with the deliciously-scented white, rose-color, or white and violet butterflies.

"It affords me immense pleasure to fix upon a wild-rose in the hedge, and graft upon it red and white cultivated roses, sometimes single roses of a magnificent golden yellow, then large Provence roses, or others variegated with red and white.

"The rivulets in our neighborhood do not produce on their banks these forget-me-nots, with their blue flowers, with which the rivulet of my garden is adorned; I mean to save the seed, and scatter it in my walks.

"I have observed two young wild quince trees in the nearest wood; next spring I will engraft upon them two of the best kinds of pears.

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"And then, how I enjoy beforehand and in imagination, the pleasure and surprise which the solitary stroller will experience when he meets in his rambles with those beautiful flowers and these delicious fruits!

"This fancy of mine may, some day or another, cause some learned botanist who is herborising in these parts a hundred years hence, to print a stupid and startling system. All these beautiful flowers will have become common in the country, and will give it an aspect peculiar to itself; and, perhaps, chance or the wind will cast a few of the seeds or some of them amidst the grass which shall cover my forgotten grave!"

This was the end of the chapter, and then there was a vignette, a very pretty one, of a cross-marked, grass-bound grave.

Some books, generally grown-up ones, put things into your head with a sort of rush, and now it suddenly rushed into mine—*"That's what I'll be!* I can think of a name hereafter—but that's what I'll do. I'll take seeds and cuttings, and off-shoots from our gardens, and set them in waste places, and hedges, and fields, and I'll make an Earthly Paradise of Mary's Meadow."

CHAPTER VI

THE only difficulty about my part was to find a name for it. I might have taken the name of the man who wrote the book—it is Alphonse Karr,—just as Arthur was going to be called John Parkinson. But I am a girl, so it seemed silly to take a man's name. And I wanted some kind of title, too, like King's Apothecary and Herbarist, or Weeding Woman, and Alphonse Karr does not seem to have had any by-name of that sort.

I had put Adela's bonnet on my head to carry it safely, and

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was still sitting thinking, when the others burst into the library.

Arthur was first, waving a sheet of paper; but when Adela saw the bonnet, she caught hold of his arm and pushed forward.

"Oh, it's sweet! Mary, dear, you're an angel: You couldn't be better if you were a real milliner and lived in Paris. I'm sure you couldn't."

"Mary," said Arthur, "remove that bonnet, which by no means becomes you, and let Adela take it into a corner and gibber over it to herself. I want you to hear this."

"You generally do want the platform," I said, laughing. "Adela, I am very glad you like it. To-morrow, if I can find a bit of pink tissue-paper, I think I could gum on little pleats round the edge of the strings as a finish."

I did not mind how gaudily I dressed the part of Weeding Woman now.

"You are good, Mary. It will make it simply perfect; and, kilts don't you think? Not box pleats?"

Arthur groaned.

"You shall have which you like, dear. Now, Arthur, what is it?"

Arthur shook out his paper, gave it a flap with the back of his hand, as you do with letters when you are acting, and said—"It's to Mother, and when she gets it, she'll be a good deal astonished, I fancy."

When I had heard the letter, I thought so, too.

"TO THE QUEEN'S MOST EXCELLENT MAJESTY—

"My Dear Mother,—This is to tell you that we have made you Queen of the Blue Robe, and that your son Christopher is a dwarf, and we think you'll both be very much pleased when you hear it. He can do as he likes about having a hump back. When you come home we shall give faire flowers into your Highnesse hands—that is if you'll do what I'm going to ask you, for nobody can grow flowers out of nothing. I want you to write to John—write straight to him, don't put it in your letter to Father—and tell him that you have given us leave to have some of the seedlings out of

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the frames, and that he's to dig us up a good big clump of daffodils out of the shrubbery—and we'll divide them fairly, for Harry is the Honestest Root-gatherer that ever came over to us. We have turned the whole of our gardens into a *Paradisi in sole Paradisus terrestris*, if you can construe that; but we must have something to make a start. He's got no end of bedding things over—that are doing nothing in the Kitchen Garden and might just as well be in our Earthly Paradise. And please tell him to keep us a tiny pinch of seed at the bottom of every paper when he is sowing the annuals. A little goes a long way, particularly of poppies. And you might give him a hint to let us have a flower-pot or two now and then (I'm sure he takes ours if he finds any of our dead window plants lying about), and that he needn't be so mighty mean about the good earth in the potting shed, or the labels either, they're dirt cheap. Mind you write straight. If only you let John know that the gardens don't entirely belong to him, you'll see that what's spare from the big garden would more than set us going; and it shall further encourage him to accomplish the remainder, who in praying that your Highnesse may enjoy the heavenly Paradise after the many years fruition of this earthly,

"Submitteth to be, your Maiestie's, in all humble devotion,

"JOHN PARKINSON,

"King's Apothecary and Herbarist.

"P. S.—It was Mary's idea."

"My dear Arthur!" said I.

"Well, I know it's not very well mixed," said Arthur. "Not half so well as I intended at first. I meant to write it all in the Parkinson style. But then, I thought, if I put the part about John in queer language and old spelling, she mightn't understand what we want. But every word of the end comes out of the Dedication; I copied it the other day, and I think she'll find it a puzzle when she comes to it."

After which Arthur folded his paper and put it into an envelope which he licked copiously, and closed the letter with a great deal of display. But then his industry coming to an abrupt end, as it often did, he tossed it to me saying, "You can address it, Mary;" so I enclosed it in my own letter to thank Mother for the book, and I fancy she did write to our gardener, for he gave us a good lot of things, and was much more good-natured than usual.

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After Arthur had tossed his letter to me, he clasped his hands over his head and walked up and down thinking. I thought he was calculating what he should be able to get out of John, for when you are planning about a garden, you seem to have to do so much calculating. Suddenly he stopped in front of me and threw down his arms. "Mary," he said, "if Mother were at home, she *would* despise us for selfishness, wouldn't she just?"

"I don't think it's selfish to want spare things for our gardens, if she gives us leave," said I.

"I'm not thinking of that," said Arthur; "and you're not selfish, you never are; but she would despise me, and Adela, and Harry, because we've taken your game, and got our parts, and you've made that preposterous bonnet for Adela to be the Weeding Woman in—much she'll weed!—"

"I *shall* weed," said Adela.

"Oh, yes! You'll weed,—Groundsel!—and leave Mary to get up the docks and dandelions, and clear away the heap. But never mind. Here we've taken Mary's game, and she hasn't even got a part."

"Yes," said I, "I have; I have got a capital part. I have only to think of a name."

"How shall you be dressed?" asked Adela.

"I don't know yet," said I. "I have only just thought of the part."

"Are you sure it's a good-enough one?" asked Harry, with a grave and remorseful air; "because, if not, you must take Francis le Vean. Girls are called Frances sometimes."

I explained, and I read aloud the bit that had struck my fancy.

Arthur got restless half-way through, and took out the Book

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of Paradise. His letter was on his mind. But Adela was truly delighted.

"Oh, Mary," she said, "it is lovely. And it just suits you. It suits you much better than being a Queen."

"Much better," said I.

"You'll be exactly the reverse of me," said Harry. "When I'm digging up, you'll be putting in."

"Mary," said Arthur, from the corner where he was sitting with the Book of Paradise in his lap, "what have you put a mark in the place about honeysuckle for?"

"Oh, only because I was just reading there when James brought the letters."

"John Parkinson can't have been quite so nice a man as Alphonse Karr," said Adela; "not so unselfish. He took care of the Queen's Gardens, but he didn't think of making the lanes and hedges nice for poor wayfarers."

I was in the rocking-chair, and I rocked harder to shake up something that was coming into my head. Then I remembered.

"Yes, Adela, he did—a little. He wouldn't root up the honeysuckle out of the hedges (and I suppose he wouldn't let his root-gatherers grub it up, either); he didn't put it in the Queen's Gardens, but left it wild outside——"

"To serve their senses that travel by it, or have no garden," interrupted Arthur, reading from the book, "and, oh, Mary! that reminds me—*travel—travelers*. I've got a name for your part just coming into my head. But it dodges out again like a wire worm through a three-pronged fork. *Travel—traveler—travelers*—what's the common name for the—oh, dear! the what's his name that scrambles about in the hedges? A flower—you know?"

"Deadly Nightshade?" said Harry.

"Deadly fiddlestick!——"

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"Bryony?" I suggested.

"Oh, no; it begins with C."

"Clematis?" said Adela.

"Clematis. Right you are, Adela. And the common name for Clematis is Traveler's Joy. And that's the name for you, Mary, because you're going to serve their senses that travel by hedges and ditches and perhaps have no garden."

"Traveler's Joy," said Harry. "Hooray!"

"Hooray!" said Adela, and she waved the Weeding Woman's bonnet.

It was a charming name, but it was too good for me, and I said so.

Arthur jumped on the rockers, and rocked me to stop my talking. When I was far back, he took the point of my chin in his two hands and lifted up my cheeks to be kissed, saying in his very kindest way, "It's not a bit too good for you—it's you all over."

Then he jumped off as suddenly as he had jumped on, and as I went back with a bounce he cried, "Oh, Mary! give me back that letter. I must put another postscript and another puzzlewig. P.P.S.—Excellent Majesty: Mary will still be our Little Mother on all common occasions, as you wished, but in the Earthly Paradise we call her Traveler's Joy."

CHAPTER VII

THERE are two or three reasons why the part of Traveler's Joy suited me very well. In the first place it required a good deal of trouble, and I like taking trouble. Then John was willing to let me do many things he would not have allowed the others to do, because he could trust me to be careful and to mind what he said.

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On each side of the long walk in the kitchen garden there are flowers between you and the vegetables, herbaceous borders, with nice big clumps of things that have suckers, and off-shoots and seedlings at their feet.

"The Long Walk's the place to steal from if I wasn't an *honest* Root-gatherer," said Harry.

John had lovely poppies there that summer. When I read about the poppies Alphonse Karr sowed in the wild nooks of his native country, it made me think of John's French poppies, and pæony poppies, and ranunculus poppies, and carnation poppies, some very large, some quite small, some round and neat, some full and ragged like Japanese chrysanthemums, but all of such beautiful shades of red, rose, crimson, pink, pale blush, and white, that if they had but smelt like carnations instead of smelling like laudanum when you have the toothache, they would have been quite perfect.

In one way they are nicer than carnations. They have such lots of seed, and it is so easy to get. I asked John to let me have some of the heads. He could not possibly want them all, for each head has enough in it to sow two or three yards of a border. He said I might have what seeds I liked, if I used scissors, and did not drag things out of the ground by pulling. But I was not to let the young gentlemen go seed gathering. "Boys be so destructive," John said.

After a time, however, I persuaded him to let Harry transplant seedlings of the things that sow themselves and come up in the autumn, if they came up a certain distance from the parent plants. Harry got a lot of things for our Paradise in this way; indeed he would not have got much otherwise, except wild flowers; and, as he said, "How can I be your Honest Root-gatherer if I mayn't gather anything up by the roots?"

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I can't help laughing sometimes to think of the morning when he left off being our Honest Root-gatherer. He did look so funny, and so like Chris.

A day or two before, the Scotch Gardener had brought Saxon to see us, and a new kind of mouldiness that had got into his grape vines to show to John.

He was very cross with Saxon for walking on my garden. (And I am sure I quite forgave him, for I am so fond of him, and he knew no better, poor dear!) But though he kicked Saxon, the Scotch Gardener was kind to us. He told us that the reason our gardens do not do so well as the big garden, and that my *Jules Margottin* has not such big roses as John's *Jules Margottin* is because we have never renewed the soil.

Arthur and Harry got very much excited about this. They made the Scotch Gardener tell them what good soil ought to be made of, and all the rest of the day they talked of nothing but *compost*. Indeed Arthur would come into my room and talk about *compost* after I had gone to bed.

Father's farming man was always much more good-natured to us than John ever was. He would give us anything we wanted. Warm milk when the cows were milked, or sweet-pea sticks, or bran to stuff the dolls' pillows. I've known him take his hedging bill, in his dinner hour, and cut fuel for our beacon-fire, when we were playing at a French Invasion. Nothing could be kinder.

Perhaps we do not tease him so much as we tease John. But when I say that, Arthur says, "Now, Mary, that's just how you explain away things. The real difference between John and Michael is, that Michael is good-natured and John is not. Catch John showing me the duck's nest by the pond, or letting you into the cow-house to kiss the new calf between the eyes—if he were farm man instead of gardener!"

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And the night Arthur sat in my room, talking about compost, he said, "I shall get some good stuff out of Michael, I know; and Harry and I see our way to road scrapings if we can't get sand; and we mean to take precious good care John doesn't have all the old leaves to himself. It's the top spit that puzzles us, and loam is the most important thing of all."

"What is top spit?" I asked.

"It's the earth you get when you dig up squares of grass out of a field like the paddock. The new earth that's just underneath. I expect John got a lot when he turfed that new piece by the pond, but I don't believe he'd spare us a flower-pot full to save his life."

"Don't quarrel with John, Arthur. It's no good."

"I won't quarrel with him if he behaves himself," said Arthur, "but we mean to have some top spit, somehow."

"If you aggravate him he'll only complain of us to Father."

"I know," said Arthur hotly, "and beastly mean of him, too, when he knows what Father is about this sort of thing."

"I know it's mean. But what's the good of fighting when you'll only get the worst of it?"

"Why, to show that you're in the right, and that you know you are," said Arthur. "Good night, Mary. We'll have a compost heap of our own this autumn, mark my words."

Next day, in spite of my remonstrances, Arthur and Harry came to open war with John, and loudly and long did they rehearse their grievances, when we were out of Father's hearing.

"Have we ever swept our own walks, except that once, long ago, when the German women came round with threepenny brooms?" asked Arthur, throwing out his right arm, as if he were making a speech. "And think of all the years John has been get-

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ting leaf mould for himself out of our copper beech leaves and now refuses us a barrow load of loam!"

The next morning but one Harry was late for breakfast, and then it seemed that he was not dressing; he had gone out,—very early, one of the servants said. It frightened me, and I went out to look for him.

When I came upon him in our gardens, it was he who was frightened.

"Oh, dear," he exclaimed, "I thought you were John!"

I have often seen Harry dirty—very dirty,—but from the mud on his boots to the marks on his face where he had pushed the hair out of his eyes with earthy fingers, I never saw him quite so grubby before. And if there had been a clean place left in any part of his clothes well away from the ground, that spot must have been soiled by a huge and very dirty sack, under the weight of which his poor little shoulders were bent nearly to his knees.

"What are you doing, Honest Root-gatherer?" I asked; "are you turning yourself into a hump-backed dwarf?"

"I'm not honest, and I'm not a root-gatherer just now," said Harry, when he had got breath after setting down his load. He spoke shyly and a little surlily like Chris when he is in mischief.

"Harry, what's that?"

"It's a sack I borrowed from Michael. It won't hurt it, it's had mangel-wurzels in already."

"What have you got in it now? It looks dreadfully heavy."

"It *is* heavy, I can tell you," said Harry, with one more rub of his dirty fingers over his face.

"You look half-dead. What is it?"

"It's top spit;" and Harry began to discharge his load on to the walk.

MARY'S MEADOW

"Oh, Harry, where did you get in?"

"Out of the paddock. I've been digging up turfs and getting this out, and putting the turfs back, and stamping them down not to show, ever since six o'clock. It *was* hard work; and I was so afraid of John coming. Mary, you won't tell tales?"

"No, Harry. But I don't think you ought to have taken it without Mother's leave."

"I don't think you can call it stealing," said Harry. "Fields are a kind of wild places anyhow, and the paddock belongs to Father, and it certainly doesn't belong to John."

"No," said I, doubtfully.

"I won't get any more; it's dreadfully hard work," said Harry, but as he shook the sack out and folded it up, he added (in rather a satisfied tone), "I've got a good deal."

I helped him to wash himself for breakfast, and half way through he suddenly smiled and said, "John Parkinson will be glad when he sees *you-know-what*, Mary, whatever the other John thinks of it."

But Harry did not cut any more turfs without leave, for he told me that he had a horrid dream that night of waking up in prison with a warder looking at him through a hole in the door of his cell, and finding out that he was in penal servitude for stealing top spit from the bottom of the paddock, and Father would not take him out of prison, and that Mother did not know about it.

However, he and Arthur made a lot of compost. They said we couldn't possibly have a Paradise without it.

It made them very impatient. We always want the spring and summer and autumn and winter to get along faster than they do. But this year Arthur and Harry were very impatient with summer.

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They were nearly caught one day by Father coming home just as they had got through the gates with Michael's old sack full of road-scrappings, instead of sand (we have not any sand growing near us, and silver sand is rather dear), but we did get leaves together and stacked them to rot into leaf mould.

Leaf mould is splendid stuff, but it takes a long time for the leaves to get mouldy, and it takes a great many, too. Arthur is rather impatient, and he used to say—"I never saw leaves stick on to branches in such a way. I mean to get into some of these old trees and give them a good shaking to remind them what time of year it is. If I don't we sha'n't have anything like enough leaves for our compost."

CHAPTER VIII

MOTHER was very much surprised by Arthur's letter, but not so much puzzled as he expected. She knew Parkinson's *Paradisus* quite well, and only wrote to ask: "What are the boys after with the old books? Does your Father know?"

But when I told her that he had given us leave to be in the library, and that we took great care of the books, and how much we enjoyed the ones about gardening, and all that we were going to do, she was very kind indeed, and promised to put on a blue dress and lace ruffles and be Queen of our Earthly Paradise as soon as she came home.

When she did come home she was much better, and so was Chris. He was delighted to be our Dwarf, but he wanted to have a hump, and he would have such a big one that it would not keep in its place, and kept slipping under his arm and into all sorts of queer positions.

MARY'S MEADOW

Not one of us enjoyed our new game more than Chris did, and he was always teasing me to tell him the story I had told the others, and to read out the names of the flowers which "the real Queen" had in her "real paradise." He made Mother promise to try to get him a bulb of the real Dwarf Daffodil as his next birthday present, to put in his own garden.

"And I'll give you some compost," said Arthur. "It'll be ever so much better than a stupid book with 'stuff' in it."

Chris did seem much stronger. He had color in his cheeks, and his head did not look so large. But he seemed to puzzle over things in it as much as ever, and he was just as odd and quaint.

One warm day I had taken the "Tour round my Garden," and was sitting near the bush in the little wood behind our house, when Chris came after me with a Japanese fan in his hand, and sat down cross-legged at my feet. As I was reading, and Mother has taught us not to interrupt people when they are reading, he said nothing, but there he sat.

"What is it, Chris?" said I.

"I am discontented," said Chris.

"I'm very sorry," said I.

"I don't think I'm selfish, particularly, but I'm discontented."

"What about?"

"Oh, Mary, I do wish I had not been away when you invented Paradise, then I should have had a name in the game."

"You've got a name, Chris. You're the Dwarf."

"Ah, but what was the Dwarf's name?"

"I don't know," I admitted.

"No; that's just it. I've only one name, and Arthur and Harry have two. Arthur is a Potheary" (Chris could never be induced to accept Apothecary as one word), "and he's John Park-

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inson as well. Harry is Honest Root-gatherer, and he is Francis le Vean. If I'd not been away I should have had two names."

"You can easily have two names," said I. "We'll call the Dwarf Thomas Brown."

Chris shook his big head.

"No, no. That wasn't his name; I know it wasn't. It's only stuff. I want another name out of the old book."

I dared not tell him that the dwarf was not in the old book. I said:

"My dear Chris, you really are discontented; we can't all have double names. Adela has only one name, she is Weeding Woman and nothing else; and I have only one name, I'm Traveler's Joy, and that's all."

"But you and Adela are girls," said Chris complacently. "The boys have two names."

I suppressed some resentment, for Christopher's eyes were beginning to look weary, and said:

"Shall I read to you for a bit?"

"No, don't read. Tell me things out of the old book. Tell me about the Queen's flowers. Don't tell me about daffodils, they make me think what a long way off my birthday is, and I'm quite discontented enough."

And Chris sighed, and lay down on the grass, with one arm under his head, and his fan in his hand; and, as well as I could remember, I told him all about the different varieties of Cowslips, down to the Franticke, or Foolish Cowslip, and he became quite happy.

Dear Father is rather shortsighted, but he can hold a round glass in his eye without cutting himself. It was the other eye which was next to Chris at prayers the following morning; but he saw his legs, and the servants had hardly got out of the hall

MARY'S MEADOW

before he shouted, "Pull up your stockings, Chris!"—and then to Mother, "Why do you keep that sloven of a girl Bessy, if she can't dress the children decently? But I can't conceive what made you put that child into knickerbockers, he can't keep his stockings up."

"Yes, I can," said Christopher, calmly, looking at his legs.

"Then what have you got 'em down for?" shouted Father.

"They're not all down," said Chris, his head still bent over his knees, till I began to fear he would have a fit.

"One of 'em is, anyhow. I saw it at prayers. Pull it up."

"Two of them are," said Christopher, never lifting his admiring gaze from his stockings. "Two of them are down, and two of them are up, quite up, quite tidy."

Dear Father rubbed his glass and put it back into his eye.

"Why, how many stockings have you got on?"

"Four," said Chris, smiling serenely at his legs; "and it isn't Bessy's fault. I put 'em all on myself, everyone of them."

At this minute James brought in the papers, and Father only laughed, and said, "I never saw such a chap," and began to read. He is very fond of Christopher, and Chris is never afraid of him.

I was going out of the room, and Chris followed me into the hall, and drew my attention to his legs, which were clothed in four stockings; one pair, as he said, being drawn tidily up over his knees, the other pair turned down with some neatness in folds a little above his ankles.

"Mary," he said, "I'm contented now."

"I'm very glad, Chris. But do leave off staring at your legs. All the blood will run into your head."

"I wish things wouldn't always get into *my* head, and nobody

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else's," said Chris, peevishly, as he raised it; but when he looked back at his stockings, they seemed to comfort him again.

"Mary, I've found another name for myself."

"Dear Chris! I'm so glad."

"It's a real one, out of the old book. I thought of it entirely by myself."

"Good Dwarf. What is your name?"

"*Hose-in-Hose*," said Christopher, still smiling down upon his legs.

CHAPTER IX

ALAS for the hose-in-hose!

I laughed over Christopher and his double stockings, and I danced for joy when Bessy's Aunt told me that she had got me a fine lot of roots of double cowslips. I never guessed what misery I was about to suffer, because of the hose-in-hose.

I had almost forgotten that Bessy's Aunt knew double cowslips. After I became Traveler's Joy I was so busy with wayside planting that I had thought less of my own garden than usual, and had allowed Arthur to do what he liked with it as part of the Earthly Paradise (and he was always changing his plans), but Bessy's Aunt had not forgotten about it, which was very good of her.

The Squire's Weeding Woman is old enough to be Bessy's Aunt, but she has an aunt of her own, who lives seven miles on the other side of the Moor, and the Weeding Woman does not get to see her very often. It is a very out-of-the-way village, and she has to wait for chances of a cart and team coming and going from one of the farms, and so get a lift.

It was the Weeding Woman's Aunt who sent me the hose-in-hose.

MARY'S MEADOW

The Weeding Woman told me—"Aunt be mortal fond of her flowers, but she've no notions of gardening, not in the ways of a gentleman's garden. But she be after 'em all along, so well as the roomatiz in her back do let her, with an old shovel and a bit of stuff to keep the frost out, one time, and the old shovel and a bit of stuff to keep 'em moistened from the drought, another time; cuddling of 'em like Christians. Ee zee, Miss, Aunt be advanced in years; her family be off her mind, zum married, zum buried; and it zim as if her flowers be like new children for her, spoilt children, too, as I zay, and most fuss about they that be least worth it, zickly uns and contrairy uns, as parents will. Many's time I do say to she—"Th' old Zquire's garden, now, 'twould zim strange to thee, sartinly 'twould! How would 'ee feel to see Gardener zowing's spring plants by the hundred, and a-throwing of 'em away by the score when beds be vull, and turning of un out for bedding plants, and throwing they away when he've made his cuttings? And she 'low she couldn't abear it, no more'n see Herod a mass-sakering of the Innocents. But if 'ee come to Bible, I do say Aunt put me in mind of the par'ble of the talents, she do, for what you give her she make ten of, while other folks be losing what they got. And 'tis well, too, for if 'twas not for givin' of un away, seein'g's she lose nothin', and can't abear to destr'y nothin', and never takes un up but to set un again, six in place of one, as I say, with such a mossel of a garden, 'Aunt, where would you be?' And she 'low she can't tell, but the Lard would provide. 'Thank He,' I says, 'You be so out o' way, and 'ee back so bad, and past traveling, zo there be no chance of 'ee ever seein' Old Zquire's Gardener's houses and they stove plants;' for if Gardener give un a pot, sure's death her'd set it in the chimbly nook on frosty nights, and put bed-quilt over un, and any cold corner would do for she."

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At this point the Weeding Woman became short of breath, and I managed to protest against taking so many plants of the hose-in-hose.

"Take un and welcome, my dear, take un and welcome," replied Bessy's Aunt. "I did say to Aunt to keep two or dree, but 'One be aal I want,' her says, 'I'll have so many agin in a few years, dividin' of un in autumn,' her says. 'Thee've one foot in grave, Aunt,' says I, 'it don't altogether become 'ee to forecast autumns,' I says, 'when next may be your latter end, 's like as not.' 'Niece,' her says, 'I be no ways presuming. His will be done,' her says, 'but if I'm spared I'll rear un, an if I'm took, 'twill be where I sha'n't want un. Zo let young lady have un,' her says. And there a bel!"

When I first saw the nice little plants, I did think of my own garden, but not for long. My next and final thought was—"Mary's Meadow!"

Since I became Traveler's Joy, I had chiefly been busy in the hedge-rows by the high-roads, and in waste places, like the old quarry, and very bare and trampled bits, where there seemed to be no flowers at all.

You cannot say that of Mary's Meadow. Not to be a garden, it is one of the most flowery places I know. I did once begin a list of all that grows in it, but it was in one of Arthur's old exercise books, which he had "thrown in," in a bargain we had, and there were very few blank pages left. I had thought a couple of pages would be more than enough, so I began with rather full accounts of the flowers, but I used up the book long before I had written out one half of what blossoms in Mary's Meadows.

Wild roses, and white bramble, and hawthorn, and dogwood, with its curious red flowers; and nuts, and maple, and privet, and all sorts of bushes in the hedge, far more than one would think;

MARY'S MEADOW

and ferns, and the stinking iris, which has such splendid berries, in the ditch—the ditch on the lower side where it is damp, and where I meant to sow forget-me-nots, like Alphonse Karr, for there are none there as it happens. On the other side, at the top of the field, it is dry, and blue succory grows, and grows out on the road beyond. The most beautiful blue possible, but so hard to pick. And there are Lent lilies, and lords and ladies, and ground ivy, which smells herby when you find it, trailing about and turning the color of Mother's "aurora" wool in green winters; and sweet white violets, and blue dog violets, and primroses, of course, and two or three kinds of orchids, and all over the field cowslips, cowslips, cowslips—to please the nightingale.

And I wondered if the nightingale would find out the hose-in-hose, when I had planted six of them in the sunniest, cosiest corner of Mary's Meadow.

For this was what I resolved to do, though I kept my resolve to myself, for which I was afterwards very glad. I did not tell the others because I thought that Arthur might want some of the plants for our Earthly Paradise, and I wanted to put them all in Mary's Meadow. I said to myself, like Bessy's great-aunt, that "if I was spared" I would go next year and divide the roots of the six, and bring some offsets to our gardens, but I would keep none back now. The nightingale should have them all.

We had been busy in our gardens, and in the roads and byelanes, and I had not been in Mary's Meadow for a long time before the afternoon when I put my little trowel, and a bottle of water, and the six hose-in-hose into a basket, and was glad to get off quietly and alone to plant them. The highways and hedges were very dusty, but there it was very green. The nightingale had long been silent, I do not know where he was, but the rooks were not at all silent; they had been holding a parliament at the

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upper end of the field this morning, and were now all talking at once, and flapping about the tops of the big elms which were turning bright yellow, whilst down below a flight of starlings had taken their place, and sat in the prettiest circles; and groups of hedge-sparrows flew and mimicked them. And in the fields round about the sheep baaed, and the air, which was very sweet, was so quiet that these country noises were the only sounds to be heard, and they could be heard from very far away.

I had found the exact spot I wanted, and had planted four of the hose-in-hose, and watered them from the bottle, and had the fifth in my hand, and the sixth still in the basket, when all these nice noises were drowned by a loud, harsh shout which made me start, and sent the flight of starlings into the next field, and made the hedge-sparrows jump into the hedge.

And when I looked up I saw the Old Squire coming towards me, and storming and shaking his fist at me as he came. But with the other hand he held Saxon by the collar, who was struggling to get away from him and to go to me.

I had so entirely forgotten about Father's quarrel with the Squire, that when the sight of the old gentleman in a rage suddenly reminded me, I was greatly stupefied and confused, and really did not at first hear what he said. But when I understood that he was accusing me of digging cowslips out of his field, I said at once (and pretty loud, for he was deaf) that I was not digging up anything, but was planting double cowslips to grow up and spread amongst the common ones.

I suppose it did sound rather unlikely, as the Old Squire knew nothing about our game, but a thing being unlikely is no reason for calling truthful people liars, and that was what the Old Squire called me.

It choked me, and when he said I was shameless, and that he



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"WHEN I LOOKED UP I SAW THE OLD SQUIRE COMING TOWARD ME AND STORMING AND SHAKING HIS FIST AT ME."

MARY'S MEADOW

had caught me with the plants upon me, and yelled to me to empty my basket, I threw away the fifth and sixth hose-in-hose as if they had been adders, but I could not speak again. He must have been beside himself with rage, for he called me all sorts of names, and said I was my father's own child, a liar and a thief. Whilst he was talking about sending me to prison (and I thought of Harry's dream, and turned cold with fear), Saxon was tugging to get to me, and at last he got away and came rushing up.

Now I knew that the Old Squire was holding Saxon back because he thought Saxon wanted to worry me as a trespasser, but I don't know whether he let Saxon go at last, because he thought I deserved to be worried, or whether Saxon got away by himself. When his paws were almost on me the Old Squire left off abusing me, and yelled to the dog, who at last, very unwillingly, went back to him, but when he just got to the Squire's feet he stopped, and pawed the ground in the funny way he sometimes does, and looked up at his master as much as to say, "You see it's only play," and then turned round and raced back to me as hard as he could lay legs to ground. This time he reached me, and jumped to lick my face, and I threw my arms round his neck and burst into tears.

When you are crying and kissing at the same time, you cannot hear anything else, so what more the Old Squire said I do not know.

I picked up my basket and trowel at once, and fled homewards as fast as I could go, which was not very fast, so breathless was I with tears and shame and fright.

When I was safe in our grounds I paused and looked back. The Old Squire was still there, shouting and gesticulating, and Saxon was at his heels, and over the hedge two cows were looking

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at him; but the rocks and the starlings were far off in distant trees and fields.

And I sobbed afresh when I remembered that I had been called a liar and a thief, and had lost every one of my hose-in-hose; and this was all that had come of trying to make an Earthly Paradise of Mary's Meadow, and of taking upon myself the name of Traveler's Joy.

CHAPTER X

I TOLD no one. It was bad enough to think of by myself. I could not have talked about it. But every day I expected that the Old Squire would send a letter or a policeman, or come himself, and rage and storm, and tell Father.

He never did; and no one seemed to suspect that anything had gone wrong, except that Mother fidgetted because I looked ill, and would show me to Dr. Solomon. It is a good thing doctors tell you what they think is the matter, and don't ask you what you think, for I could not have told him about the Squire. He said I was below par, and that it was our abominable English climate, and he sent me a bottle of tonic. And when I had taken half the bottle, and had begun to leave off watching for the policeman, I looked quite well again. So I took the rest, not to waste it, and thought myself very lucky. My only fear now was that Bessy's aunt might ask after the hose-in-hose. But she never did.

I had one more fright, where I least expected it. It had never occurred to me that Lady Catherine would take an interest in our game, and want to know what we had done, and what we were doing, and what we were going to do, or I should have been far more afraid of her than of Bessy's aunt. For the Weeding

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Woman has a good deal of delicacy, and often begs pardon for taking liberties; but if Aunt Catherine takes an interest, and wants to know, she asks one question after another, and does not think whether you like to answer or not.

She took an interest in our game after one of Christopher's luncheons with her.

She often asks Chris to go there to luncheon, all by himself. Father is not very fond of his going, chiefly, I fancy, because he is so fond of Chris, and misses him. Sometimes, in the middle of luncheon, he looks at Christopher's empty plate, and says, "I wonder what those two are talking about over their pudding. They are the queerest pair of friends." If we ask Chris what they have talked about, he wags his head, and looks very well pleased with himself, and says, "Lots of things. I tell her things, and she tells me things." And that is all we can get out of him.

A few weeks afterwards, after I lost the hose-in-hose, Chris went to have luncheon with Aunt Catherine, and he came back rather later than usual.

"You must have been telling each other a good deal to-day, Chris," I said.

"I told her lots," said Chris, complacently. "She didn't tell me nothing, hardly. But I told her lots. My apple fritter got cold whilst I was telling it. She sent it away, and had two hot ones, new, on purpose for me."

"What *did* you tell her?"

"I told her your story; she liked it very much. And I told her Daffodils, and about my birthday; and I told her Cowslips—all of them. Oh, I told her lots. She didn't tell me nothing."

A few days later, Aunt Catherine asked us to tea—all of us—me, Arthur, Adela, Harry, and Chris. And she asked us all about our game. When Harry said, "I dig up, but Mary plants

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—not in our garden, but in wild places, and woods, and hedges, and fields,” Lady Catherine blew her nose very loud, and said, “I should think you don’t do much digging and planting in that field your Father went to law about?” and my teeth chattered so with fright that I think Lady Catherine would have heard them if she hadn’t been blowing her nose. But, luckily for me, Arthur said, “Oh, we never go near Mary’s Meadow, now, we’re so busy.” And then Aunt Catherine asked what made us think of my name, and I repeated most of the bit from Alphonse Karr, for I knew it by heart now; and Arthur repeated what John Parkinson says about the “Honisuckle that groweth wild in every hedge,” and how he left it there, “to serve their senses that travel by it, or have no garden;” and then he said, “So Mary is called Traveler’s Joy, because she plants flowers in the hedges, to serve their senses that travel by them.”

“And who serves them that have no garden?” asked Aunt Catherine, sticking her gold glasses over her nose, and looking at us.

“None of us do,” said Arthur, after thinking for a minute.

“Humph!” said Aunt Catherine.

Next time Chris was asked to luncheon, I was asked, too. Father laughed at me, and teased me, but I went.

I was very much amused by the airs which Chris gave himself at table. He was perfectly behaved, but, in his quiet, old-fashioned way, he certainly gave himself airs. We have only one man indoors—James; but Aunt Catherine has three—a butler, a footman, and a second footman. The second footman kept near Christopher, who sat opposite Aunt Catherine (she made me sit on one side), and seemed to watch to attend upon him; but if Christopher did want anything, he always ignored this man, and asked the butler for it, and called him by his name.

MARY'S MEADOW

After a bit, Aunt Catherine began to talk about the game again.

"Have you got anyone to serve them that have no garden, yet?" she asked.

Christopher shook his head, and said "No."

"Humph!" said Aunt Catherine; "better take me into the game."

"Could you be of any use?" asked Christopher. "Toast and water, Chambers."

The butler nodded, as majestically as Chris himself, to the second footman, who flew to replenish the silver mug, which had been Lady Catherine's when she was a little girl. When Christopher had drained it (he was a very thirsty boy), he repeated the question.

"Do you think you could be of any use?"

Mr. Chambers, the butler, never seems to hear anything that people say, except when they ask for something to eat or drink; and he does not often hear that, because he watches to see what you want, and gives it of himself, or sends it by the footman. He looks just as he was having his photograph taken, staring at a point on the wall and thinking of nothing; but when Christopher repeated his question I saw Chambers frown. I believe he thinks Christopher presumes on Lady Catherine's kindness, and does not approve of it.

It is quite the other way with Aunt Catherine. Just when you would think she must turn angry, and scold Chris for being rude, she only begins to laugh, and shakes like a jelly (she is very stout) and encourages him. She said:

"Take care all that toast and water doesn't get into your head, Chris."

She said that to vex him, because, ever since he heard that he

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had water on the brain, Chris is very easily affronted about his head. He was affronted now, and began to eat his bread-and-butter pudding in silence, Lady Catherine still shaking and laughing. Then she wiped her eyes, and said:

"Never mind, old man, I'm going to tell you something. Put the sugar and cream on the table, Chambers, and you needn't wait."

The men went out quietly, and Aunt Catherine went on:

"Where do you think I was yesterday? In the new barracks—a place I set my face against ever since they began to build it, and spoil one of my best peeps from the Rhododendron Walk. I went to see a young cousin of mine, who was fool enough to marry a poor officer, and have a lot of little boys and girls, no handsomer than you, Chris."

"Are they as handsome?" said Chris, who had recovered himself, and was selecting currants from his pudding, and laying them aside for a final *bonne bouche*.

"Humph! Perhaps not. But they eat so much pudding, and wear out so many boots, that they are all too poor to live anywhere except in barracks."

Christopher laid down his spoon, and looked as he always looks when he is hearing a sad story.

"Is barracks like the workhouse, Aunt Catherine?" he asked.

"A good deal like the workhouse," said Aunt Catherine. Then she went on—"I told her Mother I could not begin calling at the barracks. There are some very low streets close by, and my coachman said he couldn't answer for his horses with bugles, and perhaps guns, going off when you least expect them. I told her I would ask them to dinner; and I did, but they were engaged. Well, yesterday I changed my mind, and I told Harness that I meant to go to the barracks, and the horses would have to

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take me. So we started. When we were going along the upper road, between the high hedges, what do you think I saw?"

Chris had been going on with his pudding again, but he paused to make a guess.

"A large cannon, just going off?"

"No. If I'd seen that, you wouldn't have seen any more of me. I saw masses of wild clematis scrambling everywhere, so that the hedge looked as if somebody had been dressing it up in tufts of feathers."

As she said this, Lady Catherine held out her hand to me across the table very kindly. She has a fat hand, covered with rings, and I put my hand into it.

"And what do you think came into my head?" she asked.

"Toast and water," said Chris, maliciously.

"No, you monkey. I began to think of hedge-flowers, and traveler's, and Traveler's Joy."

Aunt Catherine shook my hand here, and dropped it.

"And you thought how nice it was for the poor travelers to have such nice flowers," said Chris, smiling, and wagging his head up and down.

"Nothing of the kind," said Aunt Catherine, brusquely. "I thought what lots of flowers the travelers had already, without Mary planting any more; and I thought not one traveler in a dozen paid much attention to them—begging John Parkinson's pardon—and how much more in want of flowers people 'that have no garden' are; and then I thought of that poor girl in those bare barracks, whose old home was one of the prettiest places, with the loveliest garden, in all Berkshire."

"Was it an Earthly Paradise?" asked Chris.

"It was, indeed. Well, then I thought of her inside those brick walls, looking out on one of those yards they march about

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in, now they've cut down all the trees, and planted sentry boxes, I put my best bonnet out of the window, which always spoils the feather, and told Harness to turn his horses' heads, and drive home again."

"What for?" said Chris, as brusquely as Lady Catherine.

"I sent for Hobbs."

"Hobbs the Gardener?" said Chris.

"Hobbs the Gardener; and I told Chambers to give him the basket from the second peg, and then I sent him into the conservatory to fill it. Mary, my dear, I am very particular about my baskets. If ever I lend you my diamonds, and you lose them, I may forgive you—I shall know *that* was an accident; but if I lend you a basket, and you don't return it, don't look me in the face again. I always write my name on them, so there's no excuse. And I don't know a greater piece of impudence—and people are wonderfully impudent now-a-days—than to think that because a thing only cost fourpence, you need not be at the trouble of keeping it clean and dry, and of sending it back."

"Some more toast and water, please," said Chris.

Aunt Catherine helped him, and continued—"Hobbs is a careful man—he has been with me ten years—he doesn't cut flowers recklessly as a rule, but when I saw that basket I said, 'Hobbs, you've been very extravagant.' He looked ashamed of himself, but he said, 'I understood they was for Miss Kitty, m'm. She's been used to nice gardens, m'm.' Hobbs lived with them in Berkshire before he came to me."

"It was very nice of Hobbs," said Chris emphatically.

"Humph!" said Aunt Catherine, "the flowers were mine."

"Did you ever get to the barracks?" asked Chris, "and what was they like when you did?"

"They were about as unlike Kitty's old home as anything

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could well be. She has made her rooms pretty enough, but it was easy to see she is hard up for flowers. She's got an old rose-colored Sevres bowl that was my Grandmother's, and there it was, filled with bramble leaves and Traveler's Joy (which *she* calls Old Man's Beard; Kitty always would differ from her elders!) and a soup-plate full of forget-me-nots. She said two of the children had half-drowned themselves, and lost a good straw hat in getting them for her. Just like their mother, as I told her."

"What did she say when you brought out the basket?" asked Chris, disposing of his reserve of currants at one mouthful, and laying down his spoon.

"She said, 'Oh! oh! oh!' till I told her to say something more amusing, and then she said, 'I could cry for joy!' and, 'Tell Hobbs he remembers all my favorites.'"

Christopher here bent his head over his empty plate, and said grace (Chris is very particular about his grace), and then got down from his chair and went up to Lady Catherine, and threw his arms round her as far as they would go, saying, "You are good. And I love you. I should think she thinkd you was a fairy godmother."

After they had hugged each other, Aunt Catherine said, "Will you take me into the game, if I serve them that have no garden?"

Chris and I said "Yes" with one voice.

"Then come into the drawing-room," said Aunt Catherine, getting up and giving a hand to each of us. "And Chris shall give me a name."

Chris pondered a long time on this subject, and seemed a good deal disturbed in his mind. Presently he said, "I *won't* be selfish. You shall have it."

"Shall have what, you oddity?"

"I'm not an oddity, and I'm going to give you the name I in-

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vented for myself. But you'll have to wear four stockings, two up and two down."

"Then you may keep *that* name to yourself," said Aunt Catherine.

Christopher looked relieved.

"Perhaps you'd not like to be called Old Man's Beard?"

"Certainly not!" said Aunt Catherine.

"It *is* more of a boy's name," said Chris. "You might be the Franticke or Foolish Cowslip, but it is Jack an Apes on Horseback, too, and that's a boy's name. You shall be Daffodil, not a dwarf daffodil, but a big one, because you are big. Wait a minute—I know which you shall be. You shall be Nonsuch. It's a very big one, and it means none like it. So you shall be Nonsuch, for there's no one like you."

On which Christopher and Lady Catherine hugged each other afresh.

• • • • •
"Who told most to-day?" asked Father when we got home.

"Oh, Aunt Catherine. Much most," said Christopher.

CHAPTER XI

THE height of our game was in Autumn. It is such a good time for digging up, and planting, and dividing, and making cuttings, and gathering seeds, and sowing them, too. But it went by very quickly, and when the leaves began to fall they fell very quickly, and Arthur never had to go up the trees and shake them.

After the first hard frost we quite gave up playing at the Earthly Paradise; first, because there was nothing we could do, and, secondly, because a lot of snow fell, and Arthur had a grand idea of making snow statues all along the terrace, so that Mother

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could see them from the drawing-room windows. We worked very hard, and it was very difficult to manage legs without breaking; so we made most of them Romans in togas, and they looked very well from a distance, and lasted a long time, because the frost lasted.

And, by degrees, I almost forgot that terrible afternoon in Mary's Meadow. Only when Saxon came to see us I told him that I was very glad that no one understood his bark, so that he could not let out what had become of the hose-in-hose.

But when the winter was past, and the snowdrops came out in the shrubbery, and there were catkins on the nut trees, and the missel thrush we had been feeding in the frost sat out on mild days and sang to us, we all of us began to think of our gardens again, and to go poking about "with our noses in the borders," as Arthur said, "as if we were dogs snuffing after truffles." What we really were "snuffing after" were the plants we had planted in autumn, and which were poking and sprouting, and coming up in all directions.

Arthur and Harry did real gardening in the Easter holidays, and they captured Adela now and then, and made her weed. But Christopher's delight was to go with me to the waste places and hedges, where I had planted things as Traveler's Joy, and to get me to show them to him where they had begun to make a spring start, and to help him to make up rambling stories, which he called "Supposings," of what the flowers would be like, and what this or that traveler would say when he saw them. One of his favorite *supposings* was—"Supposing a very poor man was coming along the road, with his dinner in a handkerchief; and supposing he sat down under the hedge to eat it; and supposing it was cold beef, and he had no mustard; and supposing there was a seed on your nasturtium plants, and he knew it wouldn't poison

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him; and supposing he ate it with his beef, and it tasted nice and hot, like a pickle, wouldn't he wonder how it got there?"

But when the primroses had been out a long time, and the cowslips were coming into bloom, to my horror Christopher began "supposing" that we should find hose-in-hose in some of the fields, and all my efforts to put this idea out of his head, and to divert him from the search, were utterly in vain.

Whether it had anything to do with his having had water on the brain I do not know, but when once an idea got into Christopher's head there was no dislodging it. He now talked of hose-in-hose constantly. One day he announced that he was "discontented" once more, and should remain so till he had "found a hose-in-hose." I enticed him to a field where I knew it was possible to secure an occasional oxlip, but he only looked pale, shook his head distressingly, and said, "I don't think nothin' of Oxlips." Colored primroses would not comfort him. He professed to disbelieve in the time-honored prescription, "Plant a primrose upside down, and it will come up a polyanthus," and refused to help me to make the experiment. At last the worst came. He suddenly spoke, with smiles—"I *know* where we'll find hose-in-hose! In Mary's Meadow. It's the fullest field of cowslips there is. Hurrah! Supposing we find hose-in-hose, and supposing we find green cowslips, and supposing we find curled cowslips or galligaskins, and supposing——"

But I could not bear it. I fairly ran away from him, and shut myself up in my room and cried. I knew it was silly, and yet I could not bear the thought of having to satisfy everybody's curiosity, and describe that scene in Mary's Meadow, which had wounded me so bitterly, and explain why I had not told of it before.

I cried, too, for another reason. Mary's Meadow had been

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dear to us all, ever since I could remember. It was always our favorite field. We had coaxed our nurses there, when we could induce them to leave the high road, or when, luckily for us, on account of an epidemic, or for some other reason or another, they were forbidden to go gossiping into the town. We had "pretended" fairies in the nooks of the delightfully neglected hedges, and we had found fairy-rings to prove our pretendings true. We went there for flowers; we went there for mushrooms and puff-balls; we went there to hear the nightingale. What cowslip balls, and what cowslip tea-parties it had afforded us. It is fair to the Old Squire to say that we were sad trespassers, before he and Father quarreled and went to law. For Mary's Meadow was a field with every quality to recommend it to childish affections.

And now I was banished from it, not only by the quarrel, of which we had really not heard much, or realized it as fully, but by my own bitter memories. I cried afresh to think I should never go again to the corner where I always found the earliest violets; and then I cried to think that the nightingale would soon be back, and how that very morning, when I opened my window, I had heard the cuckoo, and could tell that he was calling from just about Mary's Meadow.

I cried my eyes into such a state, that I was obliged to turn my attention to making them fit to be seen; and I had spent quite half an hour in bathing them and breathing on my handkerchief, and dabbing them, which is more soothing, when I heard Mother calling me. I winked hard, drew a few long breaths, rubbed my cheeks, which were so white they showed up my red eyes, and ran downstairs. Mother was coming to meet me. She said—"Where is Christopher?"

It startled me. I said, "He was with me in the garden, about

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—oh, about an hour ago; have you lost him? I'll go and look for him."

And I snatched up a garden hat, which shaded my swollen eyelids, and ran out. I could not find him anywhere, and, becoming frightened, I ran down the drive, calling him as I went, and through the gate, and out into the road.

A few yards farther on I met him.

That child is most extraordinary. One minute he looks like a ghost; an hour later his face is beaming with a radiance that seems absolutely to fatten him under your eyes. That was how he looked just then as he came towards me, smiling in an effulgent sort of way, as if he were the noonday sun—no less, and carrying a small nosegay in his hand.

When he came within hearing he boasted, as if he had been Cæsar himself.

"I went; I found it. I've got them."

And as he held his hand up, and waved the nosegay—I knew all. He had been to Mary's Meadow, and the flowers between his fingers were hose-in-hose.

CHAPTER XII

"I WON'T be selfish, Mary," Christopher said. "You invented the game, and you told me about them. You shall have them in water on your dressing-table; they might get lost in the nursery. Bessy is always throwing things out. To-morrow I shall go and look for galligaskins."

I was too glad to keep them from Bessy's observation, as well as her unparalleled powers of destruction, which I knew well. I put them into a slim glass on my table, and looked stupidly at them, and then out of the window at Mary's Meadow.

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So they had lived—and grown—and settled there—and were now in bloom. *My* plants.

Next morning I was sitting, drawing, in the school-room window, when I saw the Old Squire coming up the drive. There is no mistaking him when you can see him at all. He is a big, handsome man, with white whiskers, and a white hat, and white gaiters, and he generally wears a light coat, and a flower in his button-hole. The flower he wore this morning looked like——, but I was angry with myself for thinking of it, and went on drawing again, as well as I could, for I could not help wondering why he was coming to our house. Then it struck me he might have seen Chris trespassing, and he might be coming at last to lay a formal complaint.

Twenty minutes later James came to tell me that Father wished to see me in the library, and when I got there, Father was just settling his eye-glass in his eye, and the Old Squire was standing on the hearth-rug, with a big piece of paper in his hand. And then I saw that I was right, and that the flowers in his button-hole were hose-in-hose.

As I came in he laid down the paper, took the hose-in-hose out of his button-hole in his left hand, and held out his right hand to me, saying: "I'm more accustomed to public speaking than to private speaking, Miss Mary. But—will you be friends with me?"

In Mary's Meadow my head had got all confused, because I was frightened. I was not frightened to-day, and I saw the whole matter in a moment. He had found the double cowslips, and he knew now that I was neither a liar nor a thief. I was glad, but I could not feel very friendly to him. I said, "You can speak when you are angry."

Though he was behind me, I could feel Father coming nearer,

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and I knew somehow that he had taken out his glass again to rub it and put it back, as he does when he is rather surprised or amused. I was afraid he meant to laugh at me afterwards, and he can tease terribly, but I could not have helped saying what came into my head that morning if I had tried. When you have suffered a great deal about anything, you cannot sham, not even politeness.

The Old Squire got rather red. Then he said, "I am afraid I am very hasty, my dear, and say very unjustifiable things. But I am very sorry, and I beg your pardon. Will you forgive me?"

I said, "Of course, if you're sorry, I forgive you, but you have been a very long time in repenting."

Which was true. If I had been cross with one of the others, and had borne malice for five months, I should have thought myself very wicked. But when I had said it, I felt sorry, for the old gentleman made no answer. Father did not speak either, and I began to feel very miserable. I touched the flowers, and the Old Squire gave them to me in silence. I thanked him very much, and then I said:

"I am very glad you know about it now. . . . I'm very glad they lived. . . . I hope you like them? . . . I hope, if you do like them, that they'll grow and spread all over your field."

The Old Squire spoke at last. He said, "It is not my field any longer."

I said, "Oh, why?"

"I have given it away; I have been a long time in repenting, but when I did repent I punished myself. I have given it away."

It overwhelmed me, and when he took up the big paper again, I thought he was going, and I tried to stop him, for I was sorry I had spoken unkindly to him, and I wanted to be friends.

"Please don't go," I said. "Please stop and be friends. And

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oh, please, please don't give Mary's Meadow away. You mustn't punish yourself. There's nothing to punish yourself for. I forgive you with all my heart, and I'm sorry I spoke crossly. I have been so very miserable, and I was so vexed at wasting the hose-in-hose, because Bessie's great aunt gave them to me, and I've none left. Oh, the unkindest thing you could do to me now would be to give away Mary's Meadow."

The Old Squire had taken both my hands in his, and now he asked very kindly—"Why, my dear, why don't you want me to give away Mary's Meadow?"

"Because we are so fond of it. And because I was beginning to hope that now we're friends, and you know we don't want to steal your things, or to hurt your field, perhaps you would let us play in it sometimes, and perhaps have Saxon to play with us there. We are so very fond of him, too."

"You are fond of Mary's Meadow?" said the Old Squire.

"Yes, yes! We have been fond of it all our lives. We don't think there is any field like it, and I don't believe there can be. Don't give it away. You'll never get one with such flowers in it again. And now there are hose-in-hose, and they are not at all common. Bessy's aunt's aunt has only got one left, and she's taking care of it with a shovel. And if you'll let us in we'll plant a lot of things, and do no harm, we will indeed. And the nightingale will be here directly. Oh, don't give it away!"

My head was whirling now with the difficulty of persuading him, and I did not hear what he said across me to my father. But I heard Father's reply—"Tell her yourself, sir."

On which the Old Squire stuffed the big paper into my arms, and put his hand on my head and patted it.

"I told you I was a bad hand at talking, my dear," he said, "but Mary's Meadow is given away, and that's the Deed of Gift

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which you've got in your arms, drawn up as tight as any rascal of a lawyer can do it, and that's not so tight, I believe, but what some other rascal of a lawyer could undo it. However, they may let you alone. For I've given it to you, my dear, and it is yours. So you can plant, and play, and do what you please there. 'You, and your heirs and assigns, forever,' as the rascals say."

It was my turn now to be speechless. But as I stared blankly in front of me, I saw that Father had come round, and was looking at me through his eye-glass. He nodded to me, and said, "Yes, Mary, the Squire has given Mary's Meadow to you, and it is yours."

.
Nothing would induce the Old Squire to take it back, so I had to have it, for my very own. He said he had always been sorry he had spoken so roughly to me, but he could not say so, as he and Father were not on speaking terms. Just lately he was dining with Lady Catherine, to meet her cousins from the Barracks, and she was telling people after dinner about our game (rather mean of her, I think, to let out our secrets at a dinner party), and when he heard about my planting things in the hedges, he remembered what I had said. And next day he went to the place to look, and there were the hose-in-hose.

Oh, how delighted the others were when they heard that Mary's Meadow belonged to me.

"It's like having an Earthly Paradise given to you, straight off!" said Harry.

"And one that doesn't want weeding," said Adela.

"And oh, Mary, Mary!" cried Arthur. "Think of the yards and yards of top-spit. It does rejoice me to think I can go to you now when I'm making compost, and need not be beholden to that old sell-up-your-grandfather John for as much as would fill

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Adela's weeding basket, and that's about as small an article as anyone can make-believe with."

"It's very heavy when it's full," said Adela.

"Is everything hers?" asked Christopher. "Is the grass hers, and the trees hers, and the hedges hers, and the rocks hers, and the starling hers, and will the nightingale be hers when he comes home, and if she could dig through to the other side of the world, would there be a field the same size in Australia that would be hers, and are the sheep hers, and——"

"For mercy's sake stop that catalogue, Chris," said Father. "Of course the sheep are not hers; they were moved yesterday. Bye-the-bye, Mary, I don't know what you propose to do with your property, but if you like to let it to me, I'll turn some sheep in to-morrow, and I'll pay you so much a year, which I advise you to put in the Post Office Savings' Bank."

I couldn't fancy Mary's Meadow always without sheep, so I was too thankful; though at first I could not see that it was fair that dear Father should let me have his sheep to look pretty in my field for nothing, and pay me, too. He is always teasing me about my field, and he teases me a good deal about the Squire, too. He says we have set up another queer friendship in the family, and that the Old Squire and I are as odd a pair as Aunt Catherine and Chris.

I am very fond of the Old Squire now, and he is very kind to me. He wants to give me Saxon, but I will not accept him. It would be selfish. But the Old Squire says I had better take him, for we have quite spoiled him for a yard dog by petting him, till he has not a bit of savageness left in him. We do not believe Saxon ever was savage; but I daren't say so to the Old Squire, for he does not like you to think you know better than he does about anything. There is one other subject on which he expects

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to be humored, and I am careful not to offend him. He cannot tolerate the idea that he might be supposed to have yielded to Father the point about which they went to law, in giving Mary's Meadow to me. He is always lecturing me on encroachments, and the abuse of privileges, and warning me to be very strict about trespassers on the path through Mary's Meadow; and now that the field is mine, nothing will induce him to walk in it without asking my leave. That is his protest against the decision from which he meant to appeal.

Though I have not accepted Saxon, he spends most of his time with us. He likes to come for the night, because he sleeps on the floor of my room, instead of in a kennel, which must be horrid, I am sure. Yesterday, the Old Squire said, "One of these fine days, when Master Saxon does not come home till morning, he'll find a big mastiff in his kennel, and will have to seek a home for himself where he can."

Chris had been rather whimsical lately. Father says Lady Catherine spoils him. One day he came to me looking very peevish, and said, "Mary, if a hedgehog should come and live in one of your hedges, Michael says he would be yours, he's sure. If Michael finds him, will you give him to me?"

"Yes, Chris; but what do you want with a hedgehog?"

"I want him to sleep by my bed," said Chris. "You have Saxon by your bed; I want something by mine. I want a hedgehog. I feel discontented without a hedgehog. I think I might have something the matter with my brain if I didn't get a hedgehog pretty soon. Can I go with Michael and look for him this afternoon?" and he put his hand to his forehead.

"Chris, Chris!" I said, "you should not be so sly. You're a real slyboots. Double-stockings and slyboots." And I took him on my lap.

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Chris put his arms round my neck, and buried his cheek against mine.

"I won't be sly, Mary," he whispered; and then, hugging me as he hugs Lady Catherine, he added, "For I do love you; for you are a darling, and I do really think it always was yours."

"What, Chris?"

"If not," said Chris, "why was it always called Mary's Meadow?"

NOTE.—If any readers of "Mary's Meadow" have been as completely puzzled as the writer was by the title of John Parkinson's old book, it may interest them to know that the question has been raised and answered in *Notes and Queries*.

I first saw the *Paradisi in sole Paradisus terrestris* at Kew, some years ago, and was much bewitched by its quaint charm. I grieve to say that I do not possess it; but an old friend and florist—the Rev. H. T. Ellacombe—was good enough to lend me his copy for reference, and to him I wrote for the meaning of the title. But his scholarship, and that of other learned friends, was quite at fault. My old friend's youthful energies (he will permit me to say that he is ninety-four) were not satisfied to rust in ignorance, and he wrote to *Notes and Queries* on the subject, and has been twice answered. It is an absurd play upon words, after the fashion of John Parkinson's day. Paradise, as AUNT-JUDY's readers may know, is originally an Eastern word, meaning a park, or pleasure ground. I am ashamed to say that the knowledge of this fact did not help me to the pun. *Paradisi in sole Paradisus terrestris* means Park—in—son's Earthly Paradise!

J. H. E., February, 1884.

THE STORY OF A SHORT LIFE

"But the fair guerdon when we hope to find,
And think to burst out into sudden blaze,
Comes the blind Fury with the abhorred shears
And slits the thin spun life,—'But not the praise.'"
Milton.

"It is a calumny on men to say that they are roused to heroic action by ease, hope of pleasure, recompense,—sugar-plums of any kind in this world or the next! In the meanest mortal there lies something nobler. . . . Difficulty, abnegation, martyrdom, death are the *allurements* that act on the heart of man. Kindle the inner genial life of him, you have a flame that burns up all lower considerations. . . . Not by flattering our appetites; no, by awakening the Heroic that slumbers in every heart."—*Carlyle.*

CHAPTER I

"Arma virumque cano."—*Æneid.*

"Man—and the horseradish—are most biting when grated."—
Jean Paul Richter.

"Most annoying!" said the Master of the House. His thick eyebrows were puckered just then with the vexation of his thoughts; but the lines of annoyance on his forehead were to some extent fixed lines. They helped to make him look older than his age—he was not forty—and they gathered into a fierce frown as his elbow was softly touched by his little son.

The child was defiantly like his father, even to a knitted brow, for his whole face was crumpled with the vigor of some resolve

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which he found it hard to keep, and which was symbolized by his holding the little red tip of his tongue betwixt finger and thumb.

"Put your hands down, Leonard! Put your tongue in, sir! What are you after? What do you want? What are you doing here? Be off to the nursery, and tell Jemima to keep you there. Your mother and I are busy."

Far behind the boy, on the wall, hung the portrait of one of his ancestors—a youth of sixteen. The painting was by Vandyck, and it was the most valuable of the many valuable things that strewed and decorated the room. A very perfect example of the great master's work, and uninjured by Time. The young Cavalier's face was more interesting than handsome, but so eager and refined that, set off as it was by pale-hued satin and falling hair, he might have been called effeminate, if his brief life, which ended on the field of Naseby, had not done more than common to prove his manhood. A coat of arms, blazoned in the corner of the painting, had some appearance of having been added later. Below this was rudely inscribed, in yellow paint, the motto which also decorated the elaborate stone mantelpiece opposite—*Lætus sorte mea*.

Leonard was very fond of that picture. It was known to his childish affections as "Uncle Rupert." He constantly wished that he could get into the frame and play with the dog—the dog with the upturned face and melancholy eyes, and odd resemblance to a long-haired Cavalier—on whose faithful head Uncle Rupert's slender fingers perpetually reposed.

Though not able to play with the dog, Leonard did play with Uncle Rupert—the game of trying to get out of the reach of his eyes.

"I play 'Puss-in-the-corner' with him," the child was wont to explain; "but whichever corner I get into, his eyes come after me."

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The dog looks at Uncle Rupert always, and Uncle Rupert always looks at me."

. . . "To see if you are growing up a good boy and a gallant young gentleman, such as he was." So Leonard's parents and guardians explained the matter to him, and he devoutly believed them.

Many an older and less credulous spectator stood in the light of those painted eyes, and acknowledged their spell. Very marvelous was the cunning which, by dabs and streaks of color, had kept the spirit of this long dead youth to gaze at his descendants from a sheet of canvas and stir the sympathy of strangers, parted by more than two centuries from his sorrows, with the mock melancholy of painted tears. For whether the painter had just overdone some trick of representing their liquidness, or whether the boy's eyes had brimmed over as he was standing for his portrait (his father and elder brother had died in the Civil War before him), there remains no tradition to tell. But Vandyck never painted a portrait fuller of sad dignity, even in those troubled times.

Happily for his elders, Leonard invented for himself a reason for the obvious tears.

"I believe Uncle Rupert knew that they were going to chop the poor king's head off, and that's why he looks as if he were going to cry."

It was partly because the child himself looked as if he were going to cry—and that not fractiously, but despite a struggle with himself—that, as he stood before the Master of the House, he might have been that other master of the same house come to life again at six years of age. His long, fair hair, the pliable, nervous fingers, which he had put down as he was bid, the strenuous tension of his little figure under a sense of injustice, and,

above all, his beautiful eyes, in which the tears now brimmed over the eyelashes as the waters of a lake well up through the reeds that fringe its banks. He was very, very like Uncle Rupert when he turned those eyes on his mother in mute reproach.

Lady Jane came to his defence.

"I think Leonard meant to be good. I made him promise me to try and cure himself of the habit of speaking to you when you are speaking to someone else. But, dear Leonard" (and she took the hand that had touched his father's elbow), "I don't think you were quite on honor when you interrupted Father with this hand, though you were holding your tongue with the other. That is what we call keeping a promise to the ear and breaking it to the sense."

All the Cavalier dignity came unstarched in Leonard's figure. With a red face, he answered bluntly, "I'm very sorry. I meant to keep my promise."

"Next time keep it *well*, as a gentleman should. Now, what do you want?"

"Pencil and paper, please."

"There they are. Take them to the nursery, as Father told you."

Leonard looked at his father. He had not been spoiled for six years by an irritable and indulgent parent without learning those arts of diplomacy in which children quickly become experts.

"Oh, he can stay," said the Master of the House, "and he may say a word now and then, if he doesn't talk too much. Boys can't sit mumchance always—can they, Len? There; kiss your poor old father, and get away, and keep quiet."

Lady Jane made one of many fruitless efforts on behalf of discipline.

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"I think, dear, as you told him to go, he had better go now."

"He *will* go, pretty sharp, if he isn't good. Now, for pity's sake, let's talk out this affair, and let me get back to my work."

"Have you been writing poetry this morning, Father dear?" Leonard inquired, urbanely.

He was now lolling against a writing-table of the first empire, where sheets of paper lay like fallen leaves among Japanese bronzes, old and elaborate candlesticks, grotesque letter-clips and paper-weights, quaint pottery, big seals, and spring flowers in slender Venetian glasses of many colors.

"I wrote three lines, and was interrupted four times," replied his sire, with bitter brevity.

"I think *I'll* write some poetry. I don't mind being interrupted. May I have your ink?"

"No, you may *not*!" roared the Master of the House and of the inkpot of priceless china which Leonard had seized. "Now, be off to the nursery!"

"I won't touch anything. I am going to draw out of the window," said Leonard, calmly.

He had practised the art of being troublesome to the verge of expulsion ever since he had had a whim of his own, and as skilfully as he played other games. He was seated among the cushions of the oriel window-seat (colored rays from coats of arms in the upper panes falling on his fair hair with a fanciful effect of canonizing him for his sudden goodness) almost before his father could reply.

"I advise you to stay there, and to keep quiet." Lady Jane took up the broken thread of conversation in despair.

"Have you ever seen him?"

"Yes; years ago."

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"You know I never saw either. Your sister was much older than you; wasn't she?"

"The shadows move so on the grass, and the elms have so many branches, I think I shall turn round and draw the fireplace," murmured Leonard.

"Ten years. You may be sure, if I had been grown up I should never have allowed the marriage. I cannot think what possessed my father——"

"I am doing the inscription! I can print Old English. What does L. diphthong Æ. T. U. S. mean?" said Leonard.

"It means joyful, contented, happy.—I was at Eton at the time. Disastrous ill-luck!"

"Are there any children?"

"One son. And to crown all, *his* regiment is at Asholt. Nice family party!"

"A young man! Has he been well brought up?"

"What does——"

"Will you hold your tongue, Leonard?—Is he likely to have been well brought up? However, he's 'in the Service,' as they say. I wish it didn't make one think of flunkies, what with the word service, and the liveries (I mean uniforms), and the legs, and shoulders, and swagger, and tag-rags, and epaulettes, and the fatiguing alertness and attentiveness of 'men in the Service.'"

The Master of the House spoke with the pettish accent of one who says what he does not mean, partly for lack of something better to do, and partly to avenge some inward vexation upon his hearers. He lounged languidly on a couch, but Lady Jane sat upright, and her eyes gave an unwonted flash. She came of an ancient Scottish race, that had shed its blood like water on many a battlefield, generations before the family of her English husband had become favorites at the Court of the Tudors.

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"I have so many military belongings, both in the past and the present, that I have a respect for the Service——"

He got up, and patted her head, and smiled.

"I beg your pardon, my child. Et ego——" and he looked at Uncle Rupert, who looked sadly back again: "but you must make allowances for me. Asholt Camp has been a thorn in my side from the first. And now to have the barrack-master, and the youngest subaltern of a marching regiment——"

"He's our nephew, Rupert!"

"Mine—not yours. You've nothing to do with him, thank goodness."

"Your people are my people. Now do not worry yourself. Of course I shall call on your sister at once. Will they be here for some time?"

"Five years, you may depend. He's just the sort of man to wedge himself into a snug berth at Asholt. You're an angel, Jane; you always are. But fighting ancestors are one thing, a barrack-master brother-in-law is another."

"Has he done any fighting?"

"Oh, dear, yes! Bemedalled like that Guy Fawkes General in the pawnbroker's window, that Len was so charmed by. But, my dear, I assure you——"

"*I only just want to know what S. O. R. T. E. M. E. A. means.*" Leonard hastily broke in. "*I've done it all now, and sha'n't want to know anything more.*"

"*Sorte mea is Latin for My fate, or My lot in life. Lætus, sorte mea means Happy in my lot. It is our family motto. Now, if you ask another question, off you go!*—After all, Jane, you must allow it's about as hard lines as could be, to have a few ancestral acres and a nice old place in one of the quietest, quaintest corners of Old England; and for Government to come and

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plant a Camp of Instruction, as they call it, and pour in tribes of savages in war-paint to build wigwams within a couple of miles of your lodge-gates!"

She laughed heartily.

"Dear Rupert! You *are* a born poet! You do magnify your woes so grandly. What was the brother-in-law like when you saw him?"

"Oh, the regular type. Hair cut like a pauper, or a convict" (the Master of the House tossed his own locks as he spoke), "big, swaggering sort of fellow, swallowed the poker and not digested it, rather good features, acclimatized complexion, tight fit of hot-red cloth, and general pipeclay."

"*Then he must be the Sapper!*" Leonard announced, as he advanced with a firm step and kindling eyes from the window. "Jemima's *other* brother is a Gunner. *He* dresses in blue. But they both pipeclay their gloves, and I pipeclayed mine this morning, when she did the hearth. You've no idea how nasty they look whilst it's wet, but they dry as white as snow, only mine fell among the cinders. The Sapper is very kind, both to her and to me. He gave her a brooch, and he is making me a wooden fort to put my cannon in. But the Gunner is such a funny man! I said to him, 'Gunner! why do you wear white gloves?' and he said, 'Young gentleman, why does a miller wear a white hat?' He's very funny. But I think I like the tidy one best of all. He is so very beautiful, and I should think he must be very brave."

That Leonard was permitted to deliver himself of this speech without a check can only have been due to the paralyzing nature of the shock which it inflicted on his parents, and of which he himself was pleasantly unconscious. His whole soul was in the subject, and he spoke with a certain grace and directness of ad-

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dress, and with a clear and facile enunciation, which were among the child's most conspicuous marks of good breeding.

"This is nice!" said the Master of the House between his teeth with a deepened scowl.

The air felt stormy, and Leonard began to coax. He laid his curls against his father's arm, and asked, "Did you ever see a *tidy one*, Father dear? He *is* a very splendid sort of man."

"What nonsense are you talking? What do you mean by a *tidy one*?"

There was no mistake about the storm now; and Leonard began to feel helpless, and, as usual in such circumstances, turned to Lady Jane.

"Mother told me!" he gasped.

The Master of the House also turned to Lady Jane.

"Do you mean you have heard of this before?"

She shook her head, and he seized his son by the shoulder.

"If that woman has taught you to tell untruths——"

Lady Jane firmly interposed.

"Leonard never tells untruths, Rupert. Please don't frighten him into doing so. Now, Leonard, don't be foolish and cowardly. Tell Mother quite bravely all about it. Perhaps she has forgotten."

The child was naturally brave; but the elements of excitement and uncertainty in his up-bringing were producing their natural results in a nervous and unequable temperament. It is not the least serious of the evils of being "spoilt," though, perhaps, the most seldom recognized. Many a fond parent justly fears to overdo "lessons," who is surprisingly blind to the brain-fag that comes from the strain to live at grown-up people's level; and to the nervous exhaustion produced in children, no less than in their

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elders, by indulged restlessness, discontent, and craving for fresh excitement, and for want of that sense of power and repose which comes with habitual obedience to righteous rules and regulations. Laws that can be set at naught are among the most demoralizing of influences which can curse a nation; and their effects are hardly less disastrous in the nursery. Moreover, an uncertain discipline is apt to take even the spoilt by surprise: and as Leonard seldom fully understood the checks he did receive, they unnerved him. He was unnerved now; and, even with his hand in that of his mother, he stammered over his story with ill-repressed sobs and much mental confusion.

“W—we met him out walking. I m—mean we were out walking. He was out riding. He looked like a picture in my t—t—tales from Froissart. He had a very curious kind of a helmet—n—not quite a helmet, and a beautiful green feather—at least, n—not exactly a feather and a beautiful red waistcoat, only n—not a real waistcoat, b—but——”

“Send him to bed!” roared the Master of the House. “Don’t let him prevaricate any more!”

“No, Rupert, please! I wish him to try and give a straight account. Now, Leonard, don’t be a baby; but go on and tell the truth, like a brave boy.”

Leonard desperately proceeded, sniffing as he did so.

“He c—carried a spear, like an old warrior. He truthfully did. On my honor! One end was on the tip of his foot, and there was a flag at the other end—a real fluttering pennon—there truthfully was! He does poke with his spear in battle, I do believe; but he didn’t poke us. He was b—b—beautiful to b—b—be—hold! I asked Jemima, ‘Is he another brother, for you do have such very nice brothers?’ and he said, ‘No, he’s——’”

“*Hang Jemima!*” said the Master of the House. “Now lis-

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ten to me. You said your mother told you. *What* did she tell you?"

"Je—Je—Jemima said, 'No, he's a' Orderly;' and asked the way—I qu—quite forget where to—I truthfully do. And next morning I asked Mother what does Orderly mean? And she said *tidy*. So I call him the tidy one. Dear Mother, you truthfully did—at least," added Leonard chivalrously, as Lady Jane's face gave no response, "at least, if you've forgotten, never mind: it's my fault."

But Lady Jane's face was blank because she was trying not to laugh. The Master of the House did not try long. He bit his lip, and then burst into a peal.

"Better say no more to him," murmured Lady Jane. "I'll see Jemima now, if he may stay with you."

He nodded, and, throwing himself back on the couch, held out his arms to the child.

"Well, that'll do. Put these men out of your head, and let me see your drawing."

Leonard stretched his faculties, and perceived that the storm was overpast. He clambered on to his father's knee, and their heads were soon bent lovingly together over the much-smudged sheet of paper, on which the motto from the chimney-piece was irregularly traced.

"You should have copied it from Uncle Rupert's picture. It is in plain letters there."

Leonard made no reply. His head now lay back on his father's shoulder, and his eyes were fixed on the ceiling, which was of Elizabethan date, with fantastic flowers in raised plaster-work. But Leonard did not see them at that moment. His vision was really turned inwards. Presently he said, "I am trying to think. Don't interrupt me, Father, if you please."

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The Master of the House smiled and gazed complacently at the face beside him. No painting, no china in his possession, was more beautiful. Suddenly the boy jumped down and stood alone, with his hands behind his back, and his eyes tightly shut.

"I am thinking very hard, Father. Please tell me again what our motto means."

"*'Lætus sorte mea,—Happy in my lot.'* What *are* you puzzling your little brains about?"

"Because I know—I know something so like it, and I can't think what! Yes—no! Wait a minute! I've just got it! Yes, I remember now: it was my Wednesday text!"

He opened wide shining eyes, and clapped his hands, and his clear voice rang with the added note of triumph, as he cried, "The *lot* is fallen unto me in a fair ground. Yea, I have a goodly heritage."

The Master of the House held out his arms without speaking; but when Leonard had climbed back into them, he stroked the child's hair slowly, and said, "Is that your Wednesday text?"

"Last Wednesday's. I learn a text every day. Jemima sets them. She says her grandmother made her learn texts when she was a little girl. Now, Father dear, I'll tell you what I wish you would do: and I want you to do it at once—this very minute."

"That is generally the date of your desires. What is it?"

"I don't know what you are talking about, but I know what I want. Now you and I are all alone to our very selves, I want you to come to the organ, and put that text to music like the anthem you made out of those texts Mother chose for you, for the harvest festival. I'll tell you the words, for fear you don't quite remember them, and I'll blow the bellows. You may play on all-fours with both your feet and hands; you may pull out

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trumpet handle; you may make as much noise as ever you like—you'll see how I'll blow!"

Satisfied by the sounds of music that the two were happy, Lady Jane was in no haste to go back to the library; but when she did return, Leonard greeted her warmly.

He was pumping at the bellows handle of the chamber organ, before which sat the Master of the House, not a ruffle on his brow, playing with "all-fours," and singing as he played.

Leonard's cheeks were flushed, and he cried impatiently,—

"Mother! Mother dear! I've been wanting you ever so long! Father has set my text to music, and I want you to hear it; but I want to sit by him and sing, too. So you must come and blow."

"Nonsense, Leonard! Your mother must do nothing of the sort. Jane! listen to this!—*In a fa—air grou—nd*. Bit of pure melody, that, eh? The land flowing with milk and honey seems to stretch before one's eyes——"

"No! Father, that *is* unfair. You are not to tell her bits in the middle. Begin at the beginning, and—Mother dear, will you blow, and let me sing?"

"Certainly. Yes, Rupert, please. I've done it before; and my back isn't aching to-day. Do let me!"

"Yes, do let her," said Leonard, conclusively; and he swung himself up into the seat beside his father without more ado.

"Now, Father, begin! Mother, listen! And when it comes to '*Yea*,' and I pull trumpet handle out, blow as hard as ever you can. This first bit—when he only plays—is very gentle, and quite easy to blow."

Deep breathing of the organ filled a brief silence, then a prelude stole about the room. Leonard's eyes devoured his father's face, and the Master of the House looking down on him, with

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the double complacency of father and composer, began to sing:

“‘The lot—the lot is fallen un-to me;’” and, his mouth wide-parted with smiles, Leonard sang also: “‘The lot—the lot is fallen—fallen unto me.’”

“‘In a fa—air grou—nd.’”

“‘Yea!’ (Now, Mother dear, blow! and fancy you hear trumpets!’)”

“‘Yea! YEA! I have a good-ly Her—i—tage!’”

And after Lady Jane had ceased to blow, and the musician to make music, Leonard still danced and sang wildly about the room.

“Isn’t it splendid, Mother? Father and I made it together out of my Wednesday text. Uncle Rupert, can *you* hear it? I don’t think you can. I believe you are dead and deaf, though you seem to see.”

And standing face to face with the young Cavalier, Leonard sang his Wednesday text all through:

“‘The lot is fallen unto me in a fair ground; yea, I have a goodly heritage.’”

But Uncle Rupert spoke no word to his young kinsman, though he still “seemed to see” through eyes drowned in tears.

CHAPTER II

—“an acre of barren ground; ling, heath, broom, furze, anything.”
Tempest, Act i. Scene i.

“Sound, sound the clarion, fill the fife!
To all the sensual world proclaim,
One crowded hour of glorious life
Is worth an age without a name.”

Scott.

TAKE a Highwayman’s Heath. Destroy every vestige of life with fire and axe, from the pine that has longest been a landmark, to the smallest beetle smothered in smoking moss.

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Burn acres of purple and pink heather, and pare away the young bracken that springs verdant from its ashes.

Let flame consume the perfumed gorse in all its glory, and not spare the broom, whose more exquisite yellow atones for its lack of fragrance.

In this common ruin be every lesser flower involved: blue beds of speedwell by the wayfarer's path—the daintier milkwort, and rougher red rattle—down to the very dodder that clasps the heather, let them perish, and the face of Dame Nature be utterly blackened! Then:

Shave the heath as bare as the back of your hand, and if you have felled every tree, and left not so much as a tussock of grass or a scarlet toadstool to break the force of the winds; then shall the winds come, from the east and from the west, from the north and from the south, and shall raise on your shaven heath clouds of sand that would not discredit a desert in the heart of Africa.

By some such recipe the ground was prepared for that Camp of Instruction at Asholt which was, as we have seen, a thorn in the side of at least one of its neighbors. Then a due portion of this sandy oasis in a wilderness of beauty was mapped out into lines, with military precision, and on these were built rows of little wooden huts, which were painted a neat and useful black.

The huts for married men and officers were of varying degrees of comfort and homeliness, but those for single men were like toy-boxes of wooden soldiers; it was only by doing it very tidily that you could (so to speak) put your pretty soldiers away at night when you had done playing with them, and get the lid to shut down.

But then tidiness is a virtue which—like Patience—is its own reward. And nineteen men who keep themselves clean and their belongings cleaner; who have made their nineteen beds into easy

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chairs before most people have got out of bed at all; whose tin pails are kept as bright as average teaspoons (to the envy of housewives and the shame of housemaids!); who establish a common and a holiday side to the reversible top of their one long table, and scrupulously scrub both; who have a place for everything and a discipline which obliges everybody to put everything in its place;—nineteen men, I say, with such habits, find more comfort and elbow-room in a hut than an outsider might believe possible, and hang up a photograph or two into the bargain.

But it may be at once conceded to the credit of the camp, that those who lived there thought better of it than those who did not, and that those who lived there longest were apt to like it best of all.

It was, however, regarded by different people from very opposite points of view, in each of which was some truth.

There were those to whom the place and the life were alike hateful.

They said that, from a soldier's standpoint, the life was one of exceptionally hard work, and uncertain stay, with no small proportion of the hardships and even risks of active service, and none of the more glorious chances of war.

That you might die of sunstroke on the march, or contract rheumatism, fever, or dysentery, under canvas, without drawing Indian pay and allowances; and that you might ruin your uniform as rapidly as in a campaign, and never hope to pin a ribbon over its inglorious stains.

That the military society was too large to find friends quickly in the neighborhood, and that as to your neighbors in camp, they were sure to get marching orders just when you had learnt to like them. 'And if you did *not* like them——! (But for that matter, quarrelsome neighbors are much the same everywhere.

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And a boundary road between two estates will furnish as pretty a feud as the pump of a common back-yard.)

The haters of the camp said that it had every characteristic to disqualify it for a home; that it was ugly and crowded without the appliances of civilization; that it was neither town nor country, and had the disadvantages of each without the merits of either.

That it was unshaded and unsheltered, that the lines were monotonous and yet confusing, and every road and parade-ground more dusty than another.

That the huts let in the frost in winter and the heat in summer, and were at once stuffy and draughty.

That the low roofs were like a weight upon your head, and that the torture was invariably brought to a climax on the hottest of the dog-days, when they were tarred and sanded in spite of your teeth; a process which did not insure their being water-tight or snow-proof when the weather changed.

That the rooms had no cupboards, but an unusual number of doors, through which no tall man could pass without stooping.

That only the publicity and squalor of the back-premises of the "Lines"—their drying clothes, and crumbling mud walls, their coal-boxes and slop-pails—could exceed the depressing effects of the gardens in front, where such plants as were not uprooted by the winds perished of frost or drought, and where, if some gallant creeper had stood fast and covered the nakedness of your wooden hovel, the Royal Engineers would arrive one morning, with as little announcement as the tar and sand men, and tear down the growth of years before you had finished shaving, for the purpose of repainting your outer walls.

On the other hand, there were those who had a great affection for Asholt, and affection never lacks arguments.

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Admitting some hardships and blunders, the defenders of the Camp fell back successfully upon statistics for a witness to the general good health.

They said that if the Camp was windy the breezes were exquisitely bracing, and the climate of that particular part of England such as would qualify it for a health-resort for invalids, were it only situated in a comparatively inaccessible part of the Pyrenees, instead of being within an hour or two of London.

That this fact of being within easy reach of town made the Camp practically at the headquarters of civilization and refinement, whilst the simple and sociable ways of living, necessitated by hut-life in common, emancipated its select society from rival extravagance and cumbersome formalities.

That the Camp stood on the borders of the two counties of England which rank highest on the books of estate and house-agents, and that if you did not think the country lovely and the neighborhood agreeable you must be hard to please.

That, as regards the Royal Engineers, it was one of your privileges to be hard to please, since you were entitled to their good offices; and, if, after all, they sometimes failed to cure your disordered drains and smoky chimneys, you, at any rate, did not pay as well as suffer, which is the case in civil life.

That low doors to military quarters might be regarded as a practical joke on the part of authorities, who demand that soldiers shall be both tall and upright, but that man, whether military or not, is an adaptable animal and can get used to anything; and indeed it was only those officers whose thoughts were more active than their instincts who invariably crushed their best hats before starting for town.

That huts (if only they were a little higher!) had a great many advantages over small houses, which were best appreciated by

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those who had tried drawing lodging allowance and living in villas, and which would be fully known if ever the Lines were rebuilt in brick.

That on moonlit nights the airs that fanned the silent Camp were as dry and wholesome as by day; that the song of the distant nightingale could be heard there; and finally, that from end to end of this dwelling-place of ten thousand to (on occasion) twenty thousand men, a woman might pass at midnight with greater safety than in the country lanes of a rural village or a police-protected thoroughfare of the metropolis.

But, in truth, the Camp's best defence in the hearts of its defenders was that it was a camp,—military life in epitome, with all its defects and all its charm; not the least of which, to some whimsical minds, is, that it represents, as no other phase of society represents, the human pilgrimage in brief.

Here be sudden partings, but frequent reunions; the charities and courtesies of an uncertain life lived largely in common; the hospitality of passing hosts to guests who tarry but a day.

Here, surely, should be the home of the sage as well as the soldier, where every hut might fitly carry the ancient motto, "Dwell as if about to Depart," where work bears the nobler name of duty, and where the living, hastening on his business amid "the hurryings of this life,"* must pause and stand to salute the dead as he is carried by.

Bare and dusty are the Parade Grounds, but they are thick with memories. Here were blessed the colors that became a young man's shroud that they might not be a nation's shame. Here march and music welcome the coming and speed the parting regiments. On this Parade the rising sun is greeted with gun-fire and trumpet clarions shriller than the cock, and there

* Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*.

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he sets to a like salute with tuck of drum. Here the young recruit drills, the warrior puts on his medal, the old pensioner steals back to watch them, and the soldiers' children play—sometimes at fighting or flag-wagging,* but oftener at funerals!

CHAPTER III

"Ut migraturus habita" ("Dwell as if about to Depart").—*Old House Motto.*

THE barrack-master's wife was standing in the porch of her hut, the sides of which were of the simplest trellis-work of crossed fir-poles, through which she could watch the proceedings of the gardener without baking herself in the sun. Suddenly she snatched up a green-lined white umbrella, that had seen service in India, and ran out.

"O'Reilly! what *is* that baby doing? There! that white-headed child crossing the parade with a basket in its little arms! It's got nothing on its head. Please go and take it to its mother before it gets sunstroke."

The gardener was an Irish soldier—an old soldier, as the handkerchief depending from his cap, to protect the nape of his neck from the sun, bore witness. He was a tall man, and stepped without ceremony over the garden paling to get a nearer view of the parade. But he stepped back again at once, and resumed his place in the garden.

"He's Corporal Macdonald's child, madam. The Blind Baby, they call him. Not a bit of harm will he get. They're as hard as nails the whole lot of them. If I was to take him in now, he'd be out before my back was turned. His brothers and sisters are at the school, and Blind Baby's just as happy as the day is long, playing at funerals all the time."

* "Flag-wagging," a name among soldiers' children for "signaling."

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"Blind! Is he blind? Poor little soul! But he's got a great round potato-basket in his arms. Surely they don't make that afflicted infant fetch and carry?"

O'Reilly laughed so heartily, that he scandalized his own sense of propriety.

"I ask your pardon, madam. But there's no fear that Blind Baby'll fetch and carry. Every man in the Lines is his nurse."

"But what's he doing with that round hamper as big as himself?"

"It's just a make-believe for the Big Drum, madam. The Dead March is his whole delight. 'Twas only yesterday I said to his father, 'Corporal,' I says, 'we'll live to see Blind Baby a band-master yet,' I says; 'it's a pure pleasure to see him beat out a tune with his closed fist.

"Will I go and borrow a barrow now, madam?" added O'Reilly, returning to his duties. He was always willing and never idle, but he liked change of occupation.

"No, no. Don't go away. We sha'n't want a wheelbarrow till we've finished trenching this border, and picking out the stones. Then you can take them away and fetch the new soil."

"You're at a deal of pains, madam, and it's a poor patch when all's done to it."

"I can't live without flowers, O'Reilly, and the Colonel says I may do what I like with this bare strip."

"Ah! Don't touch the dirty stones with your fingers, ma'am. I'll have the lot picked in no time at all."

"You see, O'Reilly, you can't grow flowers in sand unless you can command water, and the Colonel tells me that when it's hot here the water supply runs short, and we mayn't water the garden from the pumps."

O'Reilly smiled superior.

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"The Colonel will get what water he wants, ma'am. Never fear him! There's ways and means. Look at the gardens of the Royal Engineers' Lines. In the hottest of summer weather they're as green as Old Ireland; and it's not to be supposed that the Royal Engineers can requisition showers from the skies when they need them, more than the rest of Her Majesty's forces."

"Perhaps the Royal Engineers do what I mean to do—take more pains than usual; and put in soil that will retain some moisture. One can't make poor land yield anything without pains, O'Reilly, and this is like the dry bed of a stream—all sand and pebbles."

"That's as true a word as ever ye spoke, madam, and if it were not that 'twould be taking a liberty, I'd give ye some advice about gardening in Camp. It's not the first time I'm quartered in Asholt, and I know the ways of it."

"I shall be very glad of advice. You know I have never been stationed here before."

"'Tis an old soldier's advice, madam."

"So much the better," said the lady, warmly.

O'Reilly was kneeling to his work. He now sat back on his heels, and not without a certain dignity that bade defiance to his surroundings, he commenced his oration.

"Please God to spare you and the Colonel, madam, to put in his time as Barrack Master at this station, ye'll see many a regiment come and go, and be making themselves at home all along. And anny one that knows this place, and the nature of the soil, tear-rs would overflow his eyes to see the regiments come for drill, and betake themselves to gardening. Maybe the boys have marched in footsore and fasting, in the hottest of weather, to cold comfort in empty quarters and they'll not let many hours flit over their heads before some of 'em'll get possession of a load of

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green turf, and be laying it down for borders around their huts. It's the young ones I'm speaking of; and there ye'll see them, in the blazing sun, with their shirts open, and not a thing on their heads, squaring and fitting the turfs for bare life, watering them out of old pie-dishes and stable-buckets and whatnot, singing and whistling, and fetching and carrying between the pump and their quarters, just as cheerful as so many birds building their nests in the spring."

"A very pretty picture, O'Reilly. Why should it bring tears to your eyes? An old soldier like you must know that one would never have a home in quarters at all if one did not begin to make it at once."

"True for you, madam. Not a doubt of it. But it goes to your heart to see labor thrown away; and it's not once in a hundred times that grass planted like that will get hold of a soil like this, and the boys themselves at drill all along, or gone out under canvas in Bottomless Bog before the week's over, as likely as not."

"That would be unlucky. But one must take one's luck as it comes. And you've not told me, now, what you do advise for Camp Gardens."

"That's just what I'm coming to, ma'am. See the old soldier! What does *he* do? Turns the bucket upside down outside his hut, and sits on it, with a cap on his head, and a handkerchief down his back, and some tin tacks, and a ball of string: trust a soldier's eye to get the lines straight—every one of them beginning on the ground and going nearly up to the roof."

"For creepers, I suppose? What does the old soldier plant?"

"Beans, madam—scarlet runners. These are the things for Asholt. A few beans are nothing in your baggage. They like a warm place, and when they're on the sunny side of a hut they've

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got it, and no mistake. They're growing while you're on duty. The flowers are the right soldier's color; and when it comes to the beans, ye may put your hand out of the window and gather them, and no trouble at all."

"The old soldier is very wise; but I think I must have more flowers than that. So I plant, and if they die I am very sorry; and if they live, and other people have them, I try to be glad. One ought to learn to be unselfish, O'Reilly, and think of one's successors."

"And that's true, madam; barring that I never knew anyone's successor to have the same fancies as himself: one plants trees to give shelter, and the next cuts them down to let in the air."

"Well, I suppose the only way is to be prepared for the worst. The rose we planted yesterday by the porch is a great favorite of mine; but the Colonel calls it 'Marching Orders.' It used to grow over my window in my old home, and I have planted it by every home I have had since; but the Colonel says whenever it settled and began to flower the regiment got the route."

"The Colonel must name it again, madam," said O'Reilly, gallantly, as he hitched up the knees of his trousers, and returned to the border. "It shall be 'Standing Orders' now, if soap and water can make it blossom, and I'm spared to attend to it all the time. Many a hundred roses may you and the Colonel pluck from it, and never one with a thorn!"

"Thank you, O'Reilly; thank you very much. Soapy water is very good for roses, I believe?"

"It is so, madam. I put in a good deal of my time as officer's servant after I was in the Connaught Rangers, and the Captain I was with one time was as fond of flowers as yourself. There was a mighty fine rose-bush by his quarters, and every morning I had to carry out his bath to it. He used more soap than most

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gentlemen, and when he sent me to the town for it—‘It’s not for myself, O’Reilly,’ he’d say, ‘so much as for the Rose. Bring large tablets,’ he’d say, ‘and the best scented ye can get. The roses’ll be the sweeter for it.’ That was his way of joking, and never a smile on his face. He was odd in many of his ways, was the Captain, but he was a grand soldier entirely; a good officer, and a good friend to his men, and to the wives and children no less. The regiment was in India when he died of cholera, in twenty-four hours, do what I would. ‘Oh, the cramp in my legs, O’Reilly!’ he says. ‘God bless ye, Captain,’ says I; ‘never mind your legs; I’d manage the cramp, sir,’ I says, ‘if I could but keep up your heart.’ ‘Ye’ll not do that, O’Reilly,’ he says, ‘for all your goodness; I lost it too long ago.’ That was his way of joking, and never a smile on his face. ’Twas a pestilential hole we were in, and that’s the truth; and cost Her Majesty more in lives than would have built healthy quarters and given us every comfort; but the flowers throve there if we didn’t, and the Captain’s grave was filled till ye couldn’t get the sight of him for roses. He was a good officer, and beloved of his men; and better master never a man had!”

As he ceased speaking, O’Reilly drew his sleeve sharply across his eyes, and then bent again to his work, which was why he failed to see what the Barrack Master’s wife saw, and did not for some moments discover that she was no longer in the garden. The matter was this:

The Barrack Master’s quarters were close to the Iron Church, and the straight road that ran past both was crossed, just beyond the church, by another straight road, which finally led out to and joined a country highway. From this highway an open carriage and pair were being driven into the camp as a soldier’s funeral was marching to church. The band frightened the horses, who

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were got past with some difficulty, and having turned the sharp corner, were coming rapidly towards the Barrack Master's hut when Blind Baby, excited by the band, strayed from his parade-ground, tumbled, basket and all, into the ditch that divided it from the road, picked up himself and his basket, and was sturdily setting forth across the road just as the frightened horses came plunging to the spot.

The Barrack Master's wife was not very young, and not very slender. Rapid movements were not easy to her. She was nervous also, and could never afterwards remember what she did with herself in those brief moments before she became conscious that the footman had got to the horses' heads, and that she herself was almost under their feet, with Blind Baby in her arms. Blind Baby himself recalled her to consciousness by the ungrateful fashion in which he pummelled his deliverer with his fists and howled for his basket, which had rolled under the carriage to add to the confusion. Nor was he to be pacified till O'Reilly took him from her arms.

By this time men had rushed from every hut and kitchen, wash-place and shop, and were swarming to the rescue, and through the whole disturbance, like minute-guns, came the short barks of a black puppy, which Leonard had insisted upon taking with him to show to his aunt despite the protestations of his mother: for it was Lady Jane's carriage, and this was how the sisters met.

They had been sitting together for some time, so absorbed by the strangeness and the pleasure of their new relations that Leonard and his puppy had slipped away unobserved, when Lady Jane, who was near the window, called to her sister-in-law:—"Adelaide, tell me, my dear, is this Colonel Jones?" She spoke

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with some trepidation. It is so easy for those unacquainted with uniforms to make strange blunders. Moreover, the Barrack Master, though soldierly looking, was so, despite a very unsoldierly defect. He was exceedingly stout, and as he approached the miniature garden-gate, Lady Jane found herself gazing with some anxiety to see if he could possibly get through.

But O'Reilly did not make an empty boast when he said that a soldier's eye was true. The Colonel came quite neatly through the toy entrance, knocked nothing down in the porch, bent and bared his head with one gesture as he passed under the drawing-room doorway, and, bowing again to Lady Jane, moved straight to the side of his wife.

Something in the action—a mixture of dignity and devotion, with just a touch of defiance—went to Lady Jane's heart. She went up to him and held out both her hands:—"Please shake hands with me, Colonel Jones. I am so very happy to have found a sister!" In a moment more she turned round, saying:—"I must show you your nephew. Leonard!" But Leonard was not there.

"I fancy I have seen him already," said the Colonel. "If he is a very beautiful boy, very beautifully dressed in velvet, he's with O'Reilly, watching the funeral."

Lady Jane looked horrified, and Mrs. Jones looked much relieved.

"He's quite safe if he's with O'Reilly. But give me my sunshade, Henry, please; I dare say Lady Jane would like to see the funeral, too."

It is an Asholt amenity to take care that you miss no opportunity of seeing a funeral. It would not have occurred to Lady Jane to wish to go, but as her only child had gone she went willingly to look for him. As they turned the corner of the hut they

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came straight upon it, and at that moment the "Dead March" broke forth afresh.

The drum beat out those familiar notes which strike upon the heart rather than the ear, the brass screamed, the ground trembled to the tramp of feet and the lumbering of the gun-carriage, and Lady Jane's eyes filled suddenly with tears at the sight of the dead man's accoutrements lying on the Union Jack that serves a soldier for a pall. As she dried them she saw Leonard.

Drawn up in accurate line with the edge of the road, O'Reilly was standing to salute, and as near to the Irish private as he could squeeze himself stood the boy, his whole body stretched to the closest possible imitation of his new and deeply-revered friend, his left arm glued to his side, and the back of his little right hand laid against his brow, gazing at the pathetic pageant as it passed him with devouring eyes. And behind them stood Blind Baby, beating upon his basket.

For the basket had been recovered, and Blind Baby's equanimity also; and he wandered up and down the parade again in the sun, long after the soldier's funeral had wailed its way to the graveyard, over the heather-covered hill.

CHAPTER IV

"My mind is in the anomalous condition of hating war, and loving its discipline, which has been an incalculable contribution to the sentiment of duty . . . the devotion of the common soldier to his leader (the sign for him of hard duty) is the type of all higher devotedness, and is full of promise to other and better generations."—*George Eliot*.

'YOUR sister is as nice as nice can be, Rupert; and I like the Barrack Master very much, too. He *is* stout! But he is very active and upright, and his manners to his wife are wonderfully pretty. Do you know, there is something to me most touching in

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the way these two have knocked about the world together, and seem so happy with so little. Cottagers could hardly live more simply, and yet their ideas, or at any rate their experiences, seem so much larger than one's own."

"My dear Jane! if you've taken them up from the romantic point of view all is, indeed, accomplished. I know the wealth of your imagination, and the riches of its charity. If, in such a mood, you will admit that Jones is stout, he must be fat indeed! Never again upbraid me with the price that I paid for that Chippendale arm-chair. It will hold the Barrack Master."

"Rupert!—I cannot help saying it—it ought to have held him long ago. It makes me miserable to think that they have never been under our roof."

"Jane! Be miserable if you must; but, at least, be accurate. The Barrack Master was in India when I bought that paragon of all Chips, and he has only come home this year. Nay, my dear! Don't be vexed. I give you my word, I'm a good deal more ashamed than I like to own to think how Adelaide has been treated by the family—with me as its head. Did you make any apologies to-day, and tell her that I shall ride out to-morrow and pay my respects to her and Jones?"

"Of course. I told her you were obliged to go to town, and I would not delay to call and ask if I could be of use to them. I begged them to come here till their quarters are quite finished; but they won't. They say they are settled. I could not say much, because we ought to have asked them sooner. He is rather on his dignity with us, I think, and no wonder."

"He's disgustingly on his dignity! They both are. Because the family resented the match at first, they have refused every kind of help that one would have been glad to give him as Adelaide's husband, if only to secure their being in a decent position.

Neither interest nor money would he accept, and Adelaide has followed his lead. She has very little of her own, unfortunately; and she knows how my father left things as well as I do, and never would accept a farthing more than her bare rights. I tried some dodges, through Quills; but it was of no use. The vexation is that he has taken this post of Barrack Master as a sort of pension, which need never have been. I suppose they have to make that son an allowance. It's not likely he lives on his pay. I can't conceive how they scrub along."

And as the Master of the House threw himself into the paragon of all Chips, he ran his fingers through his hair, the length and disorder of which would have made the Barrack Master feel positively ill, with a gesture of truly dramatic despair.

"Your sister has made her room look wonderfully pretty. One would never imagine those huts could look as nice as they do inside. But it's like playing with a doll's house. One feels inclined to examine everything, and to be quite pleased that the windows have glass in them, and will really open and shut."

The Master of the House raised his eyebrows funnily.

"You did take rose-colored spectacles with you to the Camp!"

Lady Jane laughed.

"I did not see the Camp itself through them. What an incomparably dreary place it is! It makes me think of little woodcuts in missionary reports—'Sketch of a Native Settlement'—rows of little black huts that look, at a distance, as if one must creep into them on all-fours; nobody about, and an iron church on the hill."

"Most accurately described! And you wonder that I regret that a native settlement should have been removed from the enchanting distance of missionary reports to become my permanent neighbor."

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"Well, I must confess the effect it produces on me is to make me feel quite ashamed of the peace and pleasure of this dear old place, the shade and greenery outside, the space above my head, and the lovely things before my eyes inside (for you know, Rupert, how I appreciate your decorative tastes, though I have so few myself. I only scolded about the Chip because I think you might have got him for less)—when so many men bred to similar comforts, and who have served their country so well, with wives I dare say quite as delicate as I am, have to be cooped up in those ugly little kennels in that dreary place——"

"What an uncomfortable thing a Scotch conscience is!" interrupted the Master of the House. "By-the-bye, those religious instincts, which are also characteristic of your race, must have found one redeeming feature in the Camp, the 'iron church on the hill;' especially as I imagine that it is puritanically ugly!"

"There was a funeral going into it as we drove into Camp, and I wanted to tell you the horses were very much frightened."

"Richards fidgets those horses; they're quiet enough with me."

"They did not like the military band."

"They must get used to the band and to other military nuisances. It is written in the stars, as I too clearly foresee, that we shall be driving in and out of that Camp three days a-week. I can't go to my club without meeting men I was at school with who are stationed at Asholt, and expect me to look them up. As to the women, I met a man yesterday who is living in a hut, and expects a Dowager Countess and her two daughters for the ball. He has given up his dressing-room to the Dowager, and put two barrack-beds into the coal-hole for the young ladies, he says. It's an insanity!"

"Adelaide told me about the ball. The Camp seems very gay

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just now. They have had theatricals; and there is to be a grand Field Day this week."

"So our visitors have already informed me. They expect to go. Louisa Mainwaring is looking handsomer than ever, and I have always regarded her as a girl with a mind. I took her to see the peep I have cut opposite to the island, and I could not imagine why those fine eyes of hers looked so blank. Presently she said, 'I suppose you can see the Camp from the little pine-wood?' And to the little pine-wood we had to go. Both the girls have got stiff necks with craning out of the carriage window to catch sight of the white tents among the heather as they came along in the train."

"I suppose we must take them to the Field Day; but I am very nervous about those horses, Rupert."

"The horses will be taken out before any firing begins. As to bands, the poor creatures must learn, like their master, to endure the brazen liveliness of military music. It's no fault of mine that our nerves are sacrificed by any sounds less soothing than the crooning of the wood pigeons among the pines!"

No one looked forward to the big Field Day with keener interest than Leonard; and only a few privileged persons knew more about the arrangements for the day than he had contrived to learn.

O'Reilly was sent over with a note from Mrs. Jones to decline the offer of a seat in Lady Jane's carriage for the occasion. She was not very well. Leonard waylaid the messenger (whom he hardly recognized as a tidy one!), and O'Reilly gladly imparted all that he knew about the Field Day: and this was a good deal. He had it from a friend—a corporal in the Headquarters Office.

As a rule, Leonard only enjoyed a limited popularity with his mother's visitors. He was very pretty and very amusing,

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and had better qualities even than these; but he was restless and troublesome. On this occasion, however, the young ladies suffered him to trample their dresses and interrupt their conversation without remonstrance. He knew more about the Field Day than anyone in the house, and, standing among their pretty furbelows and fancy-work in stiff military attitudes, he imparted his news with an unsuccessful imitation of an Irish accent.

"O'Reilly says the March Past 'll be at eleven o'clock on the Sandy Slopes."

"Louisa, is that Major O'Reilly of the Rifles?"

"I don't know, dear. Is your friend O'Reilly in the Rifles, Leonard?"

"I don't know. I know he's an owld soldier—he told me so."

"Old, Leonard; not owld. You mustn't talk like that."

"I shall if I like. *He* does, and I mean to."

"I dare say he did, Louisa. He's always joking."

"No, he isn't. He didn't joke when the funeral went past. He looked quite grave, as if he was saying his prayers, and stood *so*."

"How touching!"

"How like him!"

"How graceful and tender-hearted Irishmen are!"

"I stood so, too. I mean to do as like him as ever I can. I do love him so very, very much!"

"Dear boy!"

"You good, affectionate little soul!"

"Give me a kiss, Leonard dear."

"No, thank you. I'm too old for kissing. He's going to march past, and he's going to look out for me with the tail of his eye, and I'm going to look out for him."

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"Do, Leonard; and mind you tell us when you see him coming."

"I can't promise. I might forget. But perhaps you can know him by the good-conduct stripe on his arm. He used to have two; but he lost one all along of St. Patrick's Day."

"That *can't* be your partner, Louisa!"

"Officers *never* have good-conduct stripes."

"Leonard, you ought not to talk to common soldiers. You've got a regular Irish brogue, and you're learning all sorts of ugly words. You'll grow up quite a vulgar little boy, if you don't take care."

"I don't want to take care. I like being Irish, and I shall be a vulgar little boy, too, if I choose. But when I do grow up, I am going to grow into an owld, owld, Owld Soldier!"

Leonard made this statement of his intentions in his clearest manner. After which, having learned that the favor of the fair is fickleness, he left the ladies, and went to look for his black puppy.

The Master of the House, in arranging for his visitors to go to the Field Day, had said that Leonard was not to be of the party. He had no wish to encourage the child's fancy for soldiers: and as Leonard was invariably restless out driving, and had a trick of kicking people's shins in his changes of mood and position, he was a most uncomfortable element in a carriage full of ladies. But it is needless to say that he stoutly resisted his father's decree; and the child's disappointment was so bitter, and he howled and wept himself into such a deplorable condition, that the young ladies sacrificed their own comfort and the crispness of their new dresses to his grief, and petitioned the Master of the House that he might be allowed to go.

The Master of the House gave in. He was accustomed to

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yield where Leonard was concerned. But the concession proved only a prelude to another struggle. Leonard wanted the black puppy to go, too.

On this point the young ladies presented no petition. Leonard's boots they had resolved to endure, but not the dog's paws. Lady Jane, too, protested against the puppy, and the matter seemed settled; but at the last moment, when all but Leonard were in the carriage, and the horses chafing to be off, the child made his appearance, and stood on the entrance-steps with his puppy in his arms, and announced, in dignified sorrow, "I really cannot go if my Sweep has to be left behind."

With one consent the grown-up people turned to look at him.

Even the intoxicating delight that color gives can hardly exceed the satisfying pleasure in which beautiful proportions steep the sense of sight; and one is often at fault to find the law that has been so exquisitely fulfilled, when the eye has no doubt of its own satisfaction.

The shallow stone steps, on the top of which Leonard stood, and the old doorway that framed him, had this mysterious grace, and, truth to say, the boy's beauty was a jewel not unworthy of its setting.

A holiday dress of crimson velvet, with collar and ruffles of old lace, became him very quaintly; and as he laid a cheek like a rose-leaf against the sooty head of his pet, and they both gazed piteously at the carriage, even Lady Jane's conscience was stifled by motherly pride. He was her only child, but as he had said of the Orderly, "a very splendid sort of one."

The Master of the House stamped his foot with an impatience that was partly real and partly, perhaps, affected.

"Well, get in somehow, if you mean to. The horses can't wait all day for you."

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No ruby-throated humming-bird could have darted more swiftly from one point to another than Leonard from the old gray steps into the carriage. Little boys can be very careful when they choose, and he trod on no toes and crumpled no finery in his flitting.

To those who know dogs, it is needless to say that the puppy showed an even superior discretion. It bore throttling without a struggle. Instinctively conscious of the alternative of being shut up in a stable for the day, and left there to bark its heart out, it shrank patiently into Leonard's grasp, and betrayed no sign of life except in the strained and pleading anxiety which a puppy's eyes so often wear.

"Your dog is a very good dog, Leonard, I must say," said Louisa Mainwaring; "but he's very ugly. I never saw such legs!"

Leonard tucked the lank black legs under his velvet and ruffles. "Oh, he's all right," he said. "He'll be very handsome soon. It's his ugly month."

"I wonder you didn't insist on our bringing Uncle Rupert and *his* dog to complete the party," said the Master of the House.

The notion tickled Leonard, and he laughed so heartily that the puppy's legs got loose, and required to be tucked in afresh. Then both remained quiet for several seconds, during which the puppy looked as anxious as ever; but Leonard's face wore a smile of dreamy content that doubled its loveliness.

But as the carriage passed the windows of the library a sudden thought struck him, and dispersed his repose.

Gripping his puppy firmly under his arm, he sprang to his feet—regardless of other people's—and waving his cap and feather above his head he cried aloud, "Good-bye, Uncle Rupert!"

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Can you hear me? Uncle Rupert, I say! I am—*lætus*—*sorte*—*meal*!”

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All the Camp was astir.

Men and bugles awoke with the dawn and the birds, and now the women and children of all ranks were on the alert. (Nowhere does so large and enthusiastic a crowd collect “to see the pretty soldiers go by,” as in those places where pretty soldiers live.)

Soon after gun-fire O'Reilly made his way from his own quarters to those of the Barrack Master, opened the back-door by some process best known to himself, and had been busy for half an hour in the drawing-room before his proceedings woke the Colonel. They had been as noiseless as possible; but the Colonel's dressing-room opened into the drawing-room, his bedroom opened into that, and all the doors and windows were open to court the air.

“Who's there?” said the Colonel from his pillow.

“'Tis O'Reilly, Sir. I ask your pardon, Sir; but I heard that the Mistress was not well. She'll be apt to want the reclining chair, Sir; and 'twas damaged in the unpacking. I got the screws last night, but I was busy soldiering * till too late; so I come in this morning, for Smith's no good at a job of the kind at all. He's a butcher to his trade.”

“Mrs. Jones is much obliged to you for thinking of it, O'Reilly.”

“'Tis an honor to oblige her, Sir. I done it sound and secure. 'Tis as safe as a rock; but I'd like to nail a bit of canvas on from the porch to the other side of the hut, for shelter, in case she'd be sitting out to taste the air and see the troops go by. 'Twill not take me five minutes, if the hammering wouldn't be too much for

* “Soldiering”—a barrack term for the furbishing up of accoutrements, etc.

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the Mistress. 'Tis a hot day, Sir, for certain, till the guns bring the rain down."

"Put it up, if you've time."

"I will, Sir. I left your sword and gloves on the kitchen-table, Sir; and I told Smith to water the rose before the sun's on to it."

With which O'Reilly adjusted the cushions of the invalid-chair, and having nailed up the bit of canvas outside, so as to form an impromptu veranda, he ran back to his quarters to put himself into marching order for the Field Day.

The Field Day broke into smiles of sunshine too early to be lasting. By breakfast time the rain came down without waiting for the guns; but those most concerned took the changes of weather cheerfully, as soldiers should. Rain damages uniforms, but it lays dust; and the dust of the Sandy Slopes was dust indeed!

After a pelting shower the sun broke forth again, and from that time onwards the weather was "Queen's Weather," and Asholt was at its best. The sandy Camp lay girdled by a zone of the verdure of early summer, which passed by miles of distance, through exquisite gradations of many blues, to meet the soft threatenings of the changeable sky. Those lowering and yet tender rain-clouds which hover over the British Isles, guardian spirits of that scanty recognized blessing—a temperate climate; Naiads of the waters over the earth, whose caprices betwixt storm and sunshine fling such beauty upon a landscape as has no parallel except in the common simile of a fair face quivering between tears and smiles.

Smiles were in the ascendant as the regiments began to leave their parade-grounds, and the surface of the Camp (usually quiet, even to dulness) sparkled with movement. Along every

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principal road the color and glitter of marching troops rippled like streams, and as the band of one regiment died away another broke upon the excited ear.

At the outlets of the Camp eager crowds waited patiently in the dusty hedges to greet favorite regiments, or watch for personal friends amongst the troops; and on the ways to the Sandy Slopes every kind of vehicle, from a drag to a donkey-cart, and every variety of pedestrian, from an energetic tourist carrying a field-glass to a more admirably energetic mother carrying a baby, disputed the highway with cavalry in brazen breast-plates, and horse-artillery whose gallant show was drowned in its own dust.

Lady Jane's visitors had expressed themselves as anxious not to miss anything, and troops were still pouring out of the Camp when the Master of the House brought his skittish horses to where a "block" had just occurred at the turn to the Sandy Slopes.

What the shins and toes of the visitors endured whilst that knot of troops of all arms disentangled itself and streamed away in gay and glittering lines, could only have been concealed by the supreme powers of endurance latent in the weaker sex; for with the sight of every fresh regiment Leonard changed his plans for his own future career, and with every change he forgot a fresh promise to keep quiet, and took by storm that corner of the carriage which for the moment offered the best point of view.

Suddenly, through the noise and dust, and above the dying away of conflicting bands into the distance, there came another sound—a sound unlike any other—the skirling of the pipes; and Lady Jane sprang up and put her arms about her son, and bade him watch for the Highlanders, and if Cousin Alan looked up as he went past to cry "Hurrah for Bonnie Scotland!"

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For this sound and this sight—the bagpipes and the Highlanders—a sandy-faced Scotch lad on the tramp to Southampton had waited for an hour past, frowning and freckling his face in the sun, and exasperating a naturally *dour* temper by reflecting on the probable pride and heartlessness of folk who wore such soft complexions and pretty clothes as the ladies and the little boy in the carriage on the other side of the road.

But when the skirling of the pipes cleft the air his cold eyes softened as he caught sight of Leonard's face, and the echo that he made to Leonard's cheer was caught up by the good-humored crowd, who gave the Scotch regiment a willing ovation as it swung proudly by. After which the carriage moved on; and for a time Leonard sat very still. He was thinking of Cousin Alan and his comrades; of the tossing plumes that shaded their fierce eyes; of the swing of kilt and sporran with their unfettered limbs; of the rhythmic tread of their white feet and the fluttering ribbons on the bagpipes; and of Alan's handsome face looking out of his most becoming bravery.

The result of his meditations Leonard announced with his usual lucidity:—

"I am Scotch, not Irish, though O'Reilly *is* the nicest man I ever knew. But I must tell him that I really cannot grow up into an Owld Soldier, because I mean to be a young Highland officer, and look at ladies with my eyes like *this*—and carry my sword *so!*"

CHAPTER V

"Oh, that a man might know the end of this day's business ere it comes!"
Julius Cæsar.

YEARS of living amongst soldiers had increased, rather than diminished, Mrs. Jones's relish for the sights and sounds of military life.

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The charm of novelty is proverbially great, but it is not so powerful as that peculiar spell which drew the retired tallow-chandler back to "shop" on melting-days, and which guided the choice of the sexton of a cemetery who only took one holiday trip in the course of seven years, and then he went to a cemetery at some distance to see how they managed matters there. And, indeed, poor humanity may be very thankful for the infatuation, since it goes far to make life pleasant in the living to plain folk who do not make a point of being discontented.

In obedience to this law of nature, the Barrack Master's wife did exactly what O'Reilly had expected her to do. As she could not drive to the Field Day, she strolled out to see the troops go by. Then the vigor derived from breakfast and the freshness of the morning air began to fail, the day grew hotter, the Camp looked dreary and deserted, and, either from physical weakness or from some untold cause, a nameless anxiety, a sense of trouble in the air, began to oppress her.

Wandering out again to try and shake it off, it was almost a relief, like the solving of a riddle, to find Blind Baby sitting upon his Big Drum, too low-spirited to play the Dead March, and crying because all the bands had "gone right away." Mrs. Jones made friends with him, and led him off to her hut for consolation, and he was soon as happy as ever, standing by the piano and beating upon his basket in time to the tunes she played for him. But the day and the hut grew hotter, and her back ached, and the nameless anxiety reasserted itself, and was not relieved by Blind Baby's preference for the Dead March over every other tune with which she tried to beguile him.

And when he had gone back to his own Parade, with a large piece of cake and many assurances that the bands would undoubtedly return, and the day wore on, and the hut became like an

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oven (in the absence of any appliances to mitigate the heat), the Barrack Master's wife came to the hasty conclusion that Asholt was hotter than India, whatever thermometers might say; and, too weary to seek for breezes outside, or to find a restful angle of the reclining-chair inside, she folded her hands in her lap and abandoned herself to the most universal remedy for most ills—patience. And patience was its own reward, for she fell asleep.

Her last thoughts as she dozed off were of her husband and her son, wishing that they were safe home again, that she might assure herself that it was not on their account that there was trouble in the air. Then she dreamed of being roused by the Colonel's voice saying, "I have bad news to tell you——" and was really awakened by straining in her dream to discover what hindered him from completing his sentence.

She had slept some time—it was now afternoon, and the air was full of sounds of the returning bands. She went out into the road and saw the Barrack Master (he was easy to distinguish at some distance!) pause on his homeward way, and then she saw her son running to join his father, with his sword under his arm; and they came on together, talking as they came.

And as soon as they got within earshot she said, "Have you bad news to tell me?"

The Colonel ran up and drew her hand within his arm.

"Come indoors, dear Love."

"You are both well?"

"Both of us. Brutally so."

"Quite well, dear Mother."

Her son was taking her other hand into caressing care; there could be no doubt about the bad news.

"Please tell me what it is."

"There has been an accident——"

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"To whom?"

"To your brother's child; that jolly little chap——"

"Oh, Henry! how?"

"He was standing up in the carriage, I believe, with a dog in his arms. George saw him when he went past—didn't you?"

"Yes. I wonder he didn't fall then. I fancy someone had told him it was our regiment. The dog was struggling, but he would take off his hat to us——"

The young soldier choked, and added with difficulty, "I think I never saw so lovely a face. Poor little cousin!"

"And he overbalanced himself?"

"Not when George saw him. I believe it was when the Horse Artillery were going by at the gallop. They say he got so much excited, and the dog barked, and they both fell. Some say there were people moving a drag, and some that he fell under the horse of a patrol. Anyhow, I'm afraid he's very much hurt. They took him straight home in an ambulance-wagon to save time. Erskine went with him. I sent off a telegram for them for a swell surgeon from town, and Lady Jane promised a line if I send over this evening. O'Reilly must go after dinner and wait for the news."

O'Reilly, sitting stiffly amid the coming and going of the servants at the Hall, was too deeply devoured by anxiety to trouble himself as to whether the footman's survey of his uniform bespoke more interest or contempt. But when—just after gun-fire had sounded from the distant camp—Jemima brought him the long-awaited-for note, he caught the girl's hand, and held it for some moments before he was able to say, "Just tell me, miss; is it good news or bad that I'll be carrying back in this bit of paper?" And as Jemima only answered by sobs, he added, almost impatiently, "Will he live, dear? Nod your head if ye can do no more."

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Jemima nodded, and the soldier dropped her hand, drew a long breath, and gave himself one of those shakes with which an Irishman so often throws off care.

"Ah, then, dry your eyes, darlin'; while there's life there's hope."

But Jemima sobbed still.

"The doctor—from London—says he may live a good while, but—but—he's to be a cripple all his days!"

"Now wouldn't I rather be meeting a tiger this evening than see the mistress's face when she gets that news!"

And O'Reilly strode back to the camp.

Going along through a shady part of the road in the dusk, seeing nothing but the red glow of the pipe with which he was consoling himself, the soldier stumbled against a lad sleeping on the grass by the roadside. It was the tramping Scotchman, and as he sprang to his feet the two Kelts broke into a fiery dialogue that seemed as if it could only come to blows.

It did not. It came to the good-natured soldier's filling the wayfarer's pipe for him.

"Much good may it do ye! And maybe the next time a decent man that's hastening home on the wings of misfortune stumbles against ye, ye'll not be so apt to take offence."

"I ask your pardon, man; I was barely wakened, and I took ye for one of these gay red-coats blustering hame after a bloodless battle on the Field Day, as they ca' it."

"Bad luck to the Field Day! A darker never dawned; and wouldn't a bloodier battle have spared a child?"

"Your child? What's happened to the bairn?"

"My child, indeed! And his mother a lady of title, no less."

"What's got him?"

"Fell out of the carriage, and was trampled into a cripple for

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all the days of his life. He that had set as fine a heart as ever beat on being a soldier; and a grand one he'd have made. 'Sure 'tis a nobleman ye'll be,' says I. "'Tis an owld soldier I mean to be, O'Reilly,' says he. And——"

"Fond of the soldiers—his mother a leddy? Man! Had he a braw new velvet coat and the face of an angel on him?"

"He had so."

"And I that thocht they'd all this warld could offer them!—A cripple? Ech, sirs!"

CHAPTER VI

"I will do it . . . for I am weak by nature, and very timorous, unless where a strong sense of duty holdeth and supporteth me. There God acteth, and not His creature."—*Lady Jane Grey*.

LEONARD was to some extent a spoiled child. But it demands a great deal of unselfish foresight, and of self-discipline, to do more for a beautiful and loving pet than play with it.

And if his grace and beauty and high spirits had been strong temptations to give him everything he desired, and his own way above all, how much greater were the excuses for indulging every whim when the radiant loveliness of health had faded to the wan wistfulness of pain, when the young limbs bounded no more, and when his boyish hopes and hereditary ambitions were cut off by the shears of a destiny that seemed drearier than death?

As soon as the poor child was able to be moved his parents took a place on the west coast of Scotland, and carried him thither.

The neighborhood of Asholt had become intolerable to them for some time to come, and a soft climate and sea-breezes were recommended for his general health.

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Jemima's dismissal was revoked. Leonard flatly, and indeed furiously, refused to have any other nurse. During the first crisis a skilled hospital nurse was engaged, but from the time that he fully recovered consciousness he would receive help from no hands but those of Jemima and Lady Jane.

Far older and wiser patients than he become ruthless in their demands upon the time and strength of those about them; and Leonard did not spare his willing slaves by night or by day. It increased their difficulties and his sufferings that the poor child was absolutely unaccustomed to prompt obedience, and disputed the Doctor's orders as he had been accustomed to dispute all others.

Lady Jane's health became very much broken, but Jemima was fortunately possessed of a sturdy body and an inactive mind, and with a devotion little less than maternal she gave up both to Leonard's service.

He had a third slave of his bed-chamber—a black one—the black puppy, from whom he had resolutely refused to part, and whom he insisted upon having upon his bed, to the Doctor's disgust. When months passed, and the black puppy became a black dog, large and cumbersome, another effort was made to induce Leonard to part with him at night; but he only complained bitterly.

"It is very odd that there cannot be a bed big enough for me and my dog. I am an invalid, and I ought to have what I want."

So the Sweep remained as his bedfellow.

The Sweep also played the part of the last straw in the drama of Jemima's life; for Leonard would allow no one but his own dear nurse to wash his own dear dog; and odd hours, in which Jemima might have snatched a little rest and relaxation, were

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spent by her in getting the big dog's still lanky legs into a tub, and keeping him there, and washing him, and drying and combing him into fit condition to spring back on to Leonard's coverlet when that imperious little invalid called for him.

It was a touching manifestation of the dog's intelligence that he learned with the utmost care to avoid jostling or hurting the poor suffering little body of his master.

Leonard's fourth slave was his father.

But the Master of the House had no faculty for nursing, and was by no means possessed of the patience needed to persuade Leonard for his good. So he could only be with the child when he was fit to be read or played to, and later on, when he was able to be out of doors. And at times he went away out of sight of his son's sufferings, and tried to stifle the remembrance of a calamity and disappointment, whose bitterness his own heart alone fully knew.

After the lapse of nearly two years Leonard suddenly asked to be taken home. He was tired of the shore, and wanted to see if the Sweep remembered the park. He wanted to see if Uncle Rupert would look surprised to see him going about in a wheel-chair. He wanted to go to the Camp again, now the Doctor said he might have drives, and see if O'Reilly was alive still, and his uncle, and his aunt, and his cousin. He wanted Father to play to him on their own organ, their very own organ, and—no, thank you!—he did not want any other music now.

He hated this nasty place, and wanted to go home. If he was going to live he wanted to live there, and if he was going to die he wanted to die there, and have his funeral his own way, if they knew a general and could borrow a gun-carriage and a band.

He didn't want to eat or to drink, or to go to sleep, or to

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take his medicine, or to go out and send the Sweep into the sea, or to be read to or played to; he wanted to go home—home—home!

The upshot of which was, that before his parents had time to put into words the idea that the agonizing associations of Asholt were still quite unendurable, they found themselves congratulating each other on having got Leonard safely home before he had cried himself into convulsions over twenty-four hours' delay.

For a time, being at home seemed to revive him. He was in less pain, in better spirits, had more appetite, and was out a great deal with his dog and his nurse. But he fatigued himself, which made him fretful, and he certainly grew more imperious every day.

His whim was to be wheeled into every nook and corner of the place, inside and out, and to show them to the Sweep. And who could have had the heart to refuse him anything in the face of that dread affliction which had so changed him amid the unchanged surroundings of his old home?

Jemima led the life of a prisoner on the tread-mill. When she wasn't pushing him about she was going errands for him, fetching and carrying. She was "never off her feet."

He moved about a little now on crutches, though he had not strength to be very active with them, as some cripples are. But they became ready instruments of his impatience to thump the floor with one end, and, not infrequently, to strike those who offended him, with the other.

His face was little less beautiful than of old, but it looked wan and weird; and his beauty was often marred by what is more destructive of beauty even than sickness—the pinched lines of peevishness and ill-temper. He suffered less, but he looked more unhappy, was more difficult to please, and more impatient

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with all efforts to please him. But then, though nothing is truer than that patience is its own reward, it has to be learned first. And, with children, what has to be learned must be taught.

To this point Lady Jane's meditations brought her one day as she paced up and down her own morning-room, and stood before the window which looked down where the elm-trees made long shadows on the grass; for the sun was declining, greatly to Jemima's relief, who had been toiling in Leonard's service through the hottest hours of a summer day.

Lady Jane had a tender conscience, and just now it was a very uneasy one. She was one of those somewhat rare souls who are by nature absolutely true. Not so much with elaborate avoidance of lying, or an aggressive candor, as straight-minded, single-eyed, clear-headed, and pure-hearted; a soul to which the truth and reality of things, and the facing of things, came as naturally as the sham of them and the blinking of them comes to others.

When such a nature has strong affections it is no light matter if love and duty come into conflict. They were in conflict now, and the mother's heart was pierced with a two-edged sword. For if she truly believed what she believed, her duty towards Leonard was not only that of a tender mother to a suffering child, but the duty of one soul to another soul, whose responsibilities no man might deliver him from, nor make agreement unto God that he should be quit of them.

And if the disabling of his body did not stop the developing, one way or another, of his mind; if to learn fortitude and patience under his pains was not only his highest duty but his best chance of happiness; then, if she failed to teach him these, of what profit was it that she would willingly have endured all his sufferings ten times over that life might be all sunshine for him?

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And deep down in her truthful soul another thought rankled. No one but herself knew how the pride of her heart had been stirred by Leonard's love for soldiers, his brave ambitions, the high spirit and heroic instincts which he inherited from a long line of gallant men and noble women. Had her pride been a sham? Did she only care for the courage of the battlefield? Was she willing that her son should be a coward, because it was not the trumpet's sound that summoned him to fortitude? She had strung her heart to the thought that, like many a mother of her race, she might live to gird on his sword; should she fail to help him to carry his cross?

At this point a cry came from below the window, and looking out she saw Leonard, beside himself with passion, raining blows like hail with his crutch upon poor Jemima, The Sweep watching matters nervously from under a garden seat.

Leonard had been irritable all day, and this was the second serious outbreak. The first had sent the Master of the House to town with a deeply-knitted brow.

Vexed at being thwarted in some slight matter, when he was sitting in his wheel-chair by the side of his father in the library, he had seized a sheaf of papers tied together with amber-colored ribbon, and had torn them to shreds. It was a fair copy of the first two cantos of *The Soul's Satiety*, a poem on which the Master of the House had been engaged for some years. He had not touched it in Scotland, and was now beginning to work at it again. He could not scold his cripple child, but he had gone up to London in a far from comfortable mood.

And now Leonard was banging poor Jemima with his crutches! Lady Jane felt that her conscience had not roused her an hour too soon.

The Master of the House dined in town, and Leonard had

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tea with his mother in her very own room; and The Sweep had tea there, too.

And when the old elms looked black against the primrose-colored sky, and it had been Leonard's bed-time for half an hour past, the three were together still.

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"I beg your pardon, Jemima, I am very sorry, and I'll never do so any more. I didn't want to beg your pardon before, because I was naughty, and because you trod on my Sweep's foot. But I beg your pardon now, because I am good—at least I am better, and I am going to try to be good."

Leonard's voice was as clear as ever, and his manner as direct and forcible. Thus he contrived to say so much before Jemima burst in (she was putting him to bed).

"My lamb! my pretty! You're always good——"

"Don't tell stories, Jemima; and please don't contradict me, for it makes me cross; and if I am cross I can't be good; and if I am not good all to-morrow I am not to be allowed to go downstairs after dinner. And there's a V. C. coming to dinner, and I do want to see him more than I want anything else in all the world."

CHAPTER VII

"What is there in the world to distinguish virtues from dishonor, or that can make anything rewardable, but the labor and the danger, the pain and the difficulty?"—*Jeremy Taylor*.

THE V. C. did not look like a bloodthirsty warrior. He had a smooth, oval, olivart face, and dreamy eyes. He was not very big, and he was absolutely unpretending. He was a young man, and only by the courtesy of his manners escaped the imputation of being a shy young man.

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Before the campaign in which he won his cross he was most distinctively known in society as having a very beautiful voice and a very charming way of singing, and yet as giving himself no airs on the subject of an accomplishment which makes some men almost intolerable to their fellowmen.

He was a favorite with ladies on several accounts, large and small. Among the latter was his fastidious choice in the words of the songs he sang, and sang with a rare fineness of enunciation.

It is not always safe to believe that a singer means what he sings; but if he sing very noble words with justness and felicity, the ear rarely refuses to flatter itself that it is learning some of the secrets of a noble heart.

Upon a silence that could be felt the last notes of such a song had just fallen. The V. C.'s lips were closed, and those of the Master of the House (who had been accompanying him) were still parted with a smile of approval, when the wheels of his chair and some little fuss at the drawing-room door announced that Leonard had come to claim his mother's promise. And when Lady Jane rose and went to meet him, the V. C. followed her.

"There is my boy, of whom I told you. Leonard, this is the gentleman you have wished so much to see."

The V. C., who sang so easily, was not a ready speaker, and the sight of Leonard took him by surprise, and kept him silent. He had been prepared to pity and be good-natured to a lame child who had a whim to see him; but not for this vision of rare beauty, beautifully dressed, with crippled limbs lapped in Eastern embroideries by his color-loving father, and whose wan face and wonderful eyes were lambent with an intelligence so eager and so wistful, that the creature looked less like a morsel of suffering humanity than like a soul fretted by the brief detention of an all-but-broken chain.



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"LEONARD, THIS IS THE GENTLEMAN YOU WISHED SO MUCH TO SEE."

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"How do you do, V. C.? I am very glad to see you. I wanted to see you more than anything in the world. I hope you don't mind seeing me because I have been a coward, for I mean to be brave now; and that is why I wanted to see you so much, because you are such a very brave man. The reason I was a coward was partly with being so cross when my back hurts, but particularly with hitting Jemima with my crutches, for no one but a coward strikes a woman. She trod on my dog's toes. This is my dog. Please pat him; he would like to be patted by a V. C. He is called the Sweep because he is black. He lives with me all along. I *have* hit *him*, but I hope I shall not be naughty again any more. I wanted to grow up into a brave soldier, but I don't think, perhaps, that I ever can now; but Mother says I can be a brave cripple. I would rather be a brave soldier, but I'm going to try to be a brave cripple. Jemima says there's no saying what you can do till you try. Please show me your Victoria Cross."

"It's on my tunic, and that's in my quarters in Camp. I'm so sorry."

"So am I. I knew you lived in Camp. I like the Camp, and I want you to tell me about your hut. Do you know my uncle, Colonel Jones? Do you know my aunt, Mrs. Jones? And my cousin, Mr. Jones? Do you know a very nice Irishman, with one good-conduct stripe, called O'Reilly? Do you know my cousin Alan in the Highlanders? But I believe he has gone away. I have so many things I want to ask you, and oh!—those ladies are coming after us! They want to take you away. Look at that ugly old thing with a hook-nose and an eye-glass, and a lace shawl and a green dress; she's just like the poll parrot in the housekeeper's room. But she's looking at you. Mother! Mother dear! Don't let them take him away. You did promise me, you know you did, that if I was good all to-day I should talk to the

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V. C. I can't talk to him if I can't have him all to myself. Do let us go into the library, and be all to ourselves. Do keep those women away, particularly the poll parrot. Oh, I hope I sha'n't be naughty! I do feel so impatient! I was good, you know I was. Why doesn't James come and show my friend into the library, and carry me out of my chair?"

"Let me carry you, little friend, and we'll run away together, and the company will say, 'There goes a V. C. running away from a poll parrot in a lace shawl!'"

"Ha! ha! You are nice and funny. But *can* you carry me? Take off this thing! Did you ever carry anybody that had been hurt?"

"Yes, several people—much bigger than you."

"Men?"

"Men."

"Men hurt like me, or wounded in battle?"

"Wounded in battle."

"Poor things! Did they die?"

"Some of them."

"I shall die pretty soon, I believe. I meant to die young, but more grown-up than this, and in battle. About your age, I think. How old are you?"

"I shall be twenty-five in October."

"That's rather old. I meant about Uncle Rupert's age. He died in battle. He was seventeen. You carry very comfortably. Now we're safe! Put me on the yellow sofa, please. I want all the cushions, because of my back. It's because of my back, you know, that I can't grow up into a soldier. I don't think I possibly can. Soldiers do have to have such very straight backs, and Jemima thinks mine will never be straight again 'on this side the grave.' So I've got to try and be brave as I am; and that's why

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I wanted to see you. Do you mind my talking rather more than you? I have so very much to say, and I've only a quarter of an hour, because of its being long past my bedtime, and a good lot of that has gone."

"Please talk, and let me listen."

"Thank you. Pat the Sweep again, please. He thinks we're neglecting him. That's why he gets up and knocks you with his head."

"Poor Sweep! Good old dog!"

"Thank you. Now should you think that if I am very good, and not cross about a lot of pain in my back and my head—really a good lot—that that would count up to be as brave as having one wound if I'd been a soldier?"

"Certainly."

"Mother says it would, and I think it might. Not a very big wound, of course, but a poke with a spear, or something of that sort. It *is* very bad sometimes, particularly when it keeps you awake at night."

"My little friend, *that* would count for lying out all night wounded on the field when the battle's over. Soldiers are not always fighting."

"Did you ever lie out for a night on a battlefield?"

"Yes, once."

"Did the night seem very long?"

"Very long; and we were very thirsty."

"So am I sometimes, but I have barley-water and lemons by my bed, and jelly, and lots of things. You'd no barley-water, had you?"

"No."

"Nothing?"

"Nothing till the rain fell, then we sucked our clothes."

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"It would take a lot of my bad nights to count up to that! But I think when I'm ill in bed I might count that like being a soldier in hospital?"

"Of course."

"I thought—no matter how good I got to be—nothing could ever count up to be as brave as a real battle, leading your men on and fighting for your country, though you know you may be killed any minute. But Mother says, if I *could* try very hard, and think of poor Jemima as well as myself, and keep brave in spite of feeling miserable, that then (particularly as I sha'n't be very long before I do die) it would be as good as if I'd lived to be as old as Uncle Rupert, and fought bravely when the battle was against me, and cheered on my men, though I knew I could never come out of it alive. Do you think it *could* count up to that? *Do you?* Oh, do answer me, and don't stroke my head! I get so impatient. You've been in battles—do you?"

"I do, I do."

"You're a V. C., and you ought to know. I suppose nothing—not even if I could be good always, from this minute right away till I die—nothing could ever count up to the courage of a V. C.?"

"God knows it could, a thousand times over!"

"Where are you going? Please don't go. Look at me. They're not going to chop the Queen's head off, are they?"

"Heaven forbid! What are you thinking about?"

"Why, because—— Look at me again. Ah! you've winked it away, but your eyes were full of tears; and the only other brave man I ever heard of crying was Uncle Rupert, and that was because he knew they were going to chop the poor King's head off."

"That was enough to make anybody cry."

"I know it was. But do you know now, when I'm wheeling about in my chair and playing with him, and he looks at me

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wherever I go; sometimes for a bit I forget about the King, and I fancy he is sorry for me. Sorry, I mean, that I can't jump about, and creep under the table. Under the table was the only place where I could get out of the sight of his eyes. Oh, dear! There's Jemima."

"But you are going to be good?"

"I know I am. And I'm going to do lessons again. I did a little French this morning—a story. Mother did most of it; but I know what the French officer called the poor old French soldier when he went to see him in a hospital."

"What?"

"*Mon brave*. That means 'my brave fellow.' A nice name, wasn't it?"

"Very nice. Here's Jemima."

"I'm coming, Jemima. I'm not going to be naughty; but you may go back to the chair, for this officer will carry me. He carries so comfortably. Come along, my Sweep. Thank you so much. You have put me in beautifully. Kiss me, please. Good night, V. C."

"Good night, *mon brave*."

CHAPTER VIII

"I am a man of no strength at all of body, nor yet of mind; but would, if I could, though I can but crawl, spend my life in the pilgrims' way. When I came at the gate that is at the head of the way, the lord of that place did entertain me freely, . . . gave me such things that were necessary for my journey, and bid me hope to the end. . . . Other brunts I also look for; but this I have resolved on, to wit, to run when I can, to go when I cannot run, and to creep when I cannot go. As to the main, I thank Him that loves me, I am fixed; my way is before me, my mind is beyond the river that has no bridge, though I am as you see."

"And behold—Mr. Ready-to-halt came by with his crutches in his hand, and he was also going on Pilgrimage."—*Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress*.

"AND if we tie with the amber-colored ribbon, then every

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time I have it out to put in a new Poor Thing, I shall remember how very naughty I was, and how I spoilt your poetry."

"Then we'll certainly tie it with something else," said the Master of the House, and he jerked away the ribbon with a gesture as decisive as his words. "Let bygones be bygones. If *I* forget it, *you* needn't remember it!"

"Oh, but, indeed, I ought to remember it; and I do think I *better had*—to remind myself never, never to be so naughty again!"

"Your mother's own son!" muttered the Master of the House; and he added aloud: "Well, I forbid you to remember it—so there! It'll be naughty if you do. Here's some red ribbon. That should please you, as you're so fond of soldiers."

Leonard and his father were seated side by side at a table in the library. The dog lay at their feet.

They were very busy; the Master of the House working under Leonard's direction, who, issuing his orders from his wheel-chair, was so full of anxiety and importance, that when Lady Jane opened the library-door he knitted his brow and put up one thin little hand, in a comically old-fashioned manner, to deprecate interruption.

"Don't make any disturbance, Mother dear, if you please. Father and I are very much engaged."

"Don't you think, Len, it would be kind to let poor Mother see what we are doing, and tell her about it?"

Leonard pondered an instant.

"Well—I don't mind."

Then, as his mother's arm came round him, he added, impetuously:

"Yes, I should like to. *You* can show, Father dear, and *I'll* do all the explaining."

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The Master of the House displayed some sheets of paper, tied with ribbon, which already contained a good deal of his handiwork, including a finely illuminated capital *L* on the title-page.

"It is to be called the Book of Poor Things, Mother dear. We're doing it in bits first; then it will be bound. It's a collection—a collection of Poor Things who've been hurt, like me; or blind, like the Organ-tuner; or had their heads—no, not their heads, they couldn't go on doing things after that—had their legs or their arms chopped off in battle, and are very good and brave about it, and manage very, very nearly as well as people who have got nothing the matter with them. Father doesn't think Poor Things is a good name. He wanted to call it Masters of Fate, because of some poetry. What was it, Father?"

"'Man is man and Master of his Fate,' " quoted the Master of the House.

"Yes, that's it. But I don't understand it so well as Poor Things. They *are* Poor Things, you know, and, of course, we shall only put in brave Poor Things: not cowardly Poor Things. It was all my idea, only Father is doing the ruling and printing, and illuminating for me. I thought of it when the Organ-tuner was here."

"The Organ-tuner?"

"Yes, I heard the organ, and I made James carry me in, and put me in the arm-chair close to the organ. And the tuner was tuning, and he looked round, and James said, 'It's the young gentleman,' and the tuner said, 'Good morning, Sir,' and I said, 'Good morning, Tuner; go on tuning, please, for I want to see you do it.' And he went on; and he dropped a tin thing, like a big extinguisher, on to the floor; and he got down to look for it, and he felt about in such a funny way that I burst out laughing. I didn't mean to be rude. I couldn't help it. And I said, 'Can't

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you see it? It's just under the table.' And he said, 'I can't see anything, Sir; I'm stone blind.' And he said, perhaps I would be kind enough to give it to him. And I said I was very sorry, but I hadn't my crutches, and so I couldn't get out of my chair without someone to help me. And he was so awfully sorry for me, you can't think! He said he didn't know I was more afflicted than he was; but I was awfully sorry for him, for I've tried shutting my eyes; and you can bear it just a minute, but then you *must* open them to see again. And I said, 'How can you do anything when you see nothing but blackness all along?' And he says he can do well enough as long as he's spared the use of his limbs to earn his own livelihood. And I said, 'Are there any more blind men, do you think, that earn their own livelihood? I wish I could earn mine!' And he said, 'There are a good many blind tuners, Sir.' And I said, 'Go on tuning, please: I like to hear you do it.' And he went on, and I did like him so much. Do you know the blind tuner, Mother dear? And don't you like him very much? I think he is just what you think very good, and I think V. C. would think it nearly as brave as a battle to be afflicted and go on earning your own livelihood when you can see nothing but blackness all along. Poor man!"

"I do think it very good of him, my darling, and very brave."

"I knew you would. And then I thought perhaps there are lots of brave afflicted people—poor things! and perhaps there never was anybody but me who wasn't. And I wished I knew their names, and I asked the tuner his name, and he told me. And then I thought of my book, for a good idea—a collection, you know. And I thought perhaps, by degrees, I might collect three hundred and sixty-five Poor Things, all brave. And so I am making Father rule it like his diary, and we've got the tuner's name down for the First of January; and if you can think

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of anybody else you must tell me, and if I think they're afflicted enough and brave enough, I'll put them in. But I shall have to be rather particular, for we don't want to fill up too fast. Now, Father, I've done the explaining, so you can show your part. Look, Mother, hasn't he ruled it well? There's only one tiny mess, and it was the Sweep shaking the table with getting up to be patted."

"He has ruled it beautifully. But what a handsome L!"

"Oh, I forgot! Wait a minute, Father; the explaining isn't quite finished. What do you think that L stands for, Mother dear?"

"For Leonard, I suppose."

"No, no! What fun! You're quite wrong. Guess again."

"Is it not the tuner's name?"

"Oh, no! He's in the first of January—I told you so. And in plain printing. Father really couldn't illuminate three hundred and sixty-five poor things!"

"Of course he couldn't. It was silly of me to think so."

"Do you give it up?"

"I must. I cannot guess."

"It's the beginning of '*Lætus sorte mea.*' Ah, you know now! You ought to have guessed without my telling you. Do you remember? I remember, and I mean to remember. I told Jemima that very night. I said, 'It means Happy with my fate, and in our family we have to be happy with it, whatever sort of a one it is.' For you told me so. And I told the tuner, and he liked hearing about it very much. And then he went on tuning, and he smiled so when he was listening to the notes, I thought he looked very happy; so I asked him, and he said, Yes, he was always happy when he was meddling with a musical instrument. But I thought most likely all brave poor things are happy with their

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fate, even if they can't tune; and I asked Father, and he said, 'Yes,' and so we are putting it into my collection—partly for that, and partly when the coat of arms is done, to show that the book belongs to me. Now, Father dear, the explaining is really quite finished this time, and you may do all the rest of the show-off yourself!"

CHAPTER IX

"St. George! a stirring life they lead,
That have such neighbors near."
Marmion.

"OH, Jemima! Jemima! I know you are very kind, and I do mean not to be impatient; but either you're telling stories or you're talking nonsense, and that's a fact. How can you say that that blue stuff is a beautiful match, and will wash the exact color, and that you're sure I shall like it when it's made up with a cord and tassels, when it's *not* the blue I want, and when you *know* the men in hospital haven't any tassels to their dressing-gowns at all! You're as bad as that horrid shopman who made me so angry. If I had not been obliged to be good, I should have liked to hit him hard with my crutch, when he kept on saying he knew I should prefer a shawl-pattern lined with crimson, if I would let him send one. Oh, here comes Father! Now, that's right; he'll know. Father dear, *is* this blue pattern the same color as that?"

"Certainly not. But what's the matter, my child?"

"It's about my dressing-gown; and I do get so tired about it, because people will talk nonsense, and won't speak the truth, and won't believe I know what I want myself. Now, I'll tell you what I want. Do you know the Hospital Lines?"

"In the Camp? Yes."

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"And you've seen all the invalids walking about in blue dressing-gowns and little red ties?"

"Yes. Charming bits of color."

"Hurrah! that's just it! Now, Father dear, if you wanted a dressing-gown exactly like that—*would* you have one made of this?"

"Not if I knew it! Crude, coarse, staring—please don't wave it in front of my eyes, unless you want to make me feel like a bull with a red rag before him!"

"Oh, Father dear, you *are* sensible! (Jemima, throw this pattern away, please!) But you'd have felt far worse if you'd seen the shawl-pattern lined with crimson. Oh, I do wish I could have been a bull that wasn't obliged to be *lætus* for half a minute, to give that shopman just one toss! But I believe the best way to do will be as O'Reilly says—get Uncle Henry to buy me a real one out of store, and have it made smaller for me. And I should like it 'out of store.'"

From this conversation it will be seen that Leonard's military bias knew no change. Had it been less strong it could only have served to intensify the pain of the heartbreaking associations which anything connected with the troops now naturally raised in his parents' minds. But it was a sore subject that fairly healed itself.

The Camp had proved a more cruel neighbor than the Master of the House had ever imagined in his forebodings; but it also proved a friend. For if the high, ambitious spirit, the ardent imagination, the vigorous will, which fired the boy's fancy for soldiers and soldier-life, had thus led to his calamity, they found in that sympathy with men of hardihood and lives of discipline, not only an interest that never failed and that lifted the sufferer out of himself, but a constant incentive to those virtues of cour-

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age and patience for which he struggled with touching conscientiousness.

Then, without disparagement to the earnestness of his efforts to be good, it will be well believed that his parents did their best to make goodness easy to him. His vigorous individuality still swayed the plans of the household, and these came to be regulated by those of the Camp to a degree which half annoyed and half amused its Master.

The *Asholt Gazette* was delivered as regularly as the *Times*; but on special occasions, the arrangements for which were only known the night before, O'Reilly, or some other Orderly, might be seen wending his way up the Elm Avenue by breakfast time, "with Colonel Jones' compliments, and the Orders of the Day for the young gentleman." And so many were the military displays at which Leonard contrived to be present, that the associations of pleasure and alleviation with Parades and Manœuvres came at last almost to blot out the associations of pain connected with that fatal Field Day.

He drove about a great deal, either among air-cushions in the big carriage or in a sort of perambulator of his own, which was all too easily pushed by anyone, and by the side of which the Sweep walked slowly and contentedly, stopping when Leonard stopped, wagging his tail when Leonard spoke, and keeping sympathetic step to the invalid's pace with four sinewy black legs, which were young enough and strong enough to have ranged for miles over the heather hills and never felt fatigue. A true dog friend!

What the Master of the House pleasantly called "Our Military Mania," seemed to have reached its climax during certain July manœuvres of the regiments stationed at Asholt, and of additional troops who lay out under canvas in the surrounding country.

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Into this mimic campaign Leonard threw himself heart and soul. His camp friends furnished him with early information of the plans for each day, so far as the generals of the respective forces allowed them to get wind, and with an energy that defied his disabilities he drove about after "the armies," and then scrambled on his crutches to points of vantage where the carriage could not go.

And the Master of the House went with him.

The house itself seemed soldier-bewitched. Orderlies were as plentiful as rooks among the elm-trees. The staff clattered in and out, and had luncheon at unusual hours, and strewed the cedar-wood hall with swords and cocked hats, and made low bows over Lady Jane's hand, and rode away among the trees.

These were weeks of pleasure and enthusiasm for Leonard, and of not less delight for the Sweep; but they were followed by an illness.

That Leonard bore his sufferings better helped to conceal the fact that they undoubtedly increased; and he over-fatigued himself and got a chill, and had to go to bed, and took the Sweep to bed with him.

And it was when he could play at no "soldier-game," except that of "being in hospital," that he made up his mind to have a blue dressing-gown of regulation color and pattern, and met with the difficulties aforesaid in carrying out his whim.

CHAPTER X

"Fills the room up of my absent child,
Lies in his bed, walks up and down with me;
Puts on his pretty looks, repeats his words,
Remembers me of all his gracious parts,
Stuffs out his vacant garments with his form."

King John, Act iii.

LONG years after they were written, a bundle of letters lay

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in the drawer of a cabinet in Lady Jane's morning-room, carefully kept, each in its own envelope, and every envelope stamped with the postmark of Asholt Camp.

They were in Leonard's handwriting. A childish hand, though good for his age, but round and clear as his own speech.

After much coaxing and considering, and after consulting with the doctors, Leonard had been allowed to visit the Barrack Master and his wife. After his illness he was taken to the seaside, which he liked so little that he was bribed to stay there by the promise that, if the Doctor would allow it, he should, on his return, have the desire of his heart, and be permitted to live for a time "in Camp," and sleep in a hut.

The Doctor gave leave. Small quarters would neither mar nor mend an injured spine; and if he felt the lack of space and luxuries to which he was accustomed, he would then be content to return home.

The Barrack Master's hut only boasted one spare bed-chamber for visitors, and when Leonard and his dog were in it there was not much elbow-room. A sort of cupboard was appropriated for the use of Jemima, and Lady Jane drove constantly into Camp to see her son. Meanwhile he proved a very good correspondent, as his letters will show for themselves.

LETTER I

"BARRACK MASTER'S HUT,
"The Camp, Asholt.

"MY DEAR, DEAR MOTHER,—

"I hope you are quite well, and Father also. I am very happy, and so is the Sweep. He tried sleeping on my bed last night, but there was not room, though I gave him as much as ever I could. So he slept on the floor. It is a camp bed, and folds up, if you want it to. We have nothing like it. It belonged to a real General. The General is dead. Uncle Henry bought it at his sale. You always have a sale if you die, and your brother-officers buy your things to pay your debts. Sometimes you get them very cheap. I mean the things.

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"The drawers fold up, too. I mean the chest of drawers, and so does the wash-hand-stand. It goes into the corner, and takes up very little room. There couldn't be a bigger one, or the door would not open—the one that leads into the kitchen. The other door leads into a passage. I like having the kitchen next me. You can hear everything. You can hear O'Reilly come in the morning, and I call to him to open my door, and he says, 'Yes, sir,' and opens it, and lets the Sweep out for a run, and takes my boots. And you can hear the tap of the boiler running with your hot water before she brings it, and you can smell the bacon frying for breakfast.

"Aunt Adelaide was afraid I should not like being woke up so early, but I do. I waked a good many times. First with the gun. It's like a very short thunder, and shakes you. And then the bugles play. Father would like *them*! And then right away in the distance—trumpets. And the air comes in so fresh at the window. And you pull up the clothes, if they've fallen off you, and go to sleep again. Mine had all fallen off, except the sheet, and the Sweep was lying on them. Wasn't it clever of him to have found them in the dark? If I can't keep them on, I'm going to have campaigning blankets; they are sewed up like a bag, and you get into them.

"What do you think I found on my coverlet when I went to bed? A real, proper, blue dressing-gown, and a crimson tie! It came out of store, and Aunt Adelaide made it smaller herself. Wasn't it kind of her?

"I have got it on now. Presently I am going to dress properly, and O'Reilly is going to wheel me down to the stores. It will be great fun. My cough has been pretty bad, but it's no worse than it was at home.

"There's a soldier come for the letters, and they are obliged to be ready.

"I am, your loving and dutiful son,

"LEONARD.

"P. S.—Uncle Henry says his father was very old-fashioned, and he always liked him to put 'Your dutiful son,' so I put it to you.

"All these crosses mean kisses, Jemima told me."

LETTER II

". . . I WENT to church yesterday, though it was only Tuesday. I need not have gone unless I liked, but I liked. There is service every evening in the Iron Church, and Aunt Adelaide goes, and so do I, and sometimes Uncle Henry. There are not very many people go, but they behave very well, what there are. You can't tell what the officers belong to in the afternoon, because they are in plain clothes; but Aunt Adelaide thinks they were Royal Engineers, except one Commissariat one, and an A. D. C., and the Colonel of a regiment that marched in last week. You can't tell what the ladies belong to unless you know them.

"You can always tell the men. Some were Barrack Sergeants, and some were Sappers, and there were two Gunners, and an Army Hospital Corps, and a Cavalry Corporal who came all the way from the barracks, and sat near the door, and said very long prayers to himself at the end. And there were some schoolmasters, and a man with gray hair and no uniform, who mends the roofs and teaches in the Sunday School, and I forget the rest.

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Most of the choir are Sappers and Commissariat men, and the boys are soldiers' sons. The Sappers and Commissariat belong to our Brigade.

"There is no Sexton to our Church. He's a Church Orderly. He has put me a kind of a back in the corner of one of the Officers' Seats, to make me comfortable in church, and a very high footstool. I mean to go every day, and as often as I can on Sundays, without getting too much tired.

"You can go very often on Sunday mornings if you want to. They begin at eight o'clock, and go on till luncheon. There's a fresh band, and a fresh chaplain, and a fresh sermon, and a fresh congregation every time. Those are Parade Services. The others are Voluntary Services, and I thought that meant for the Volunteers; but O'Reilly laughed, and said, 'No, it only means that there's no occasion to go to them at all'—he means unless you like. But then I do like. There's no sermon on week days. Uncle Henry is very glad, and so am I. I think it might make my back ache.

"I am afraid, dear Mother, that you won't be able to understand all I write to you from the Camp; but if you don't, you must ask me and I'll explain.

"When I say *our quarters*, remember I mean our hut; and when I say *rations* it means bread and meat, and I'm not quite sure if it means coals and candles as well. But I think I'll make you a Dictionary if I can get a ruled book from the Canteen. It would make this letter too much to go for a penny if I put all the words in I know. Cousin George tells me them when he comes in after mess. He told me the Camp name for Iron Church is Tin Tabernacle; but Aunt Adelaide says it's not, and I'm not to call it so, so I don't. But that's what he says.

"I like Cousin George very much. I like his uniform. He is very thin, particularly round the waist. Uncle Henry is very stout, particularly round the waist. Last night George came in after mess, and two other officers out of his regiment came, too. And then another officer came in. And they chaffed Uncle Henry, and Uncle Henry doesn't mind. And the other officers said, 'Three times round a Subaltern—once round a Barrack Master.' And so they got Uncle Henry's sword-belt out of his dressing-room, and George and his friends stood back to back, and held up their jackets out of the way, and the other officer put the belt right round them, all three, and told them not to laugh. And Aunt Adelaide said, 'Oh!' and 'you'll hurt them.' And he said, 'Not a bit of it.' And he buckled it. So that shows. It was great fun.

"I am, your loving and dutiful son,

"LEONARD.

"P. S.—The other officer is an Irish officer—at least, I think so, but I can't be quite sure, because he won't speak the truth. I said, 'You talk rather like O'Reilly; are you an Irish soldier?' And he said, 'I'd the misfortune to be quartered for six months in the County Cork, and it was the ruin of my French accent.' So I said, 'Are you a Frenchman?' and they all laughed, so I don't know.

"P. S. No. 2.—My back has been very bad, but Aunt Adelaide says I have been very good. This is not meant for swagger, but to let you know.

"(*Swagger* means boasting. If you're a soldier, swagger is the next worst thing to running away.)

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"P. S. No. 3.—I know another officer now. I like him. He is a D. A. Q. M. G. I would let you guess that if you could ever find it out, but you couldn't. It means Deputy-Assistant-Quarter-Master-General. He is not so grand as you would think; a plain General is really grander. Uncle Henry says so, and he knows."

LETTER III

"... I HAVE seen V. C. I have seen him twice. I have seen his cross. The first time was at the Sports. Aunt Adelaide drove me there in the pony carriage. We stopped at the Enclosure. The Enclosure is a rope, with a man taking tickets. The Sports are inside; so is the tent, with tea; so are the ladies, in awfully pretty dresses, and the officers walking round them.

"There's great fun outside, at least, I should think so. There's a crowd of people, and booths, and a skeleton man. I saw his picture. I should like to have seen him, but Aunt Adelaide didn't want to, so I tried to be *lætus* without.

"When we got to the Enclosure there was a gentleman taking his ticket, and when he turned round he was V. C. Wasn't it funny? So he came back and said, 'Why, here's my little friend!' And he said, 'You must let me carry you.' And so he did, and put me among the ladies. But the ladies got him a good deal. He went and talked to lots of them, but I tried to be *lætus* without him; and then Cousin George came, and lots of others, and then the V. C. came back and showed me things about the Sports.

"Sports are very hard work: they make you so hot and tired; but they are very nice to watch. The races were great fun, particularly when they fell in the water, and the men in sacks who hop, and the blindfolded men with wheelbarrows. Oh, they were so funny! They kept wheeling into each other, all except one, and he went wheeling and wheeling right away up the field, all by himself and all wrong! I did laugh.

"But what I liked best were the tent-pegging men, and most best of all, the Tug-of-War.

"The Irish officer did tent-pegging. He has the dearest pony you ever saw. He is so fond of it, and it is so fond of him. He talks to it in Irish, and it understands him. He cut off the Turk's head,—not a real Turk, a sham Turk, and not a whole one, only the head stuck on a pole.

"The Tug-of-War was splendid! Two sets of men pulling at a rope to see which is strongest. They did pull! They pulled so hard, both of them, with all their might and main, that we thought it must be a drawn battle. But at last one set pulled the other over, and then there was such a noise that my head ached dreadfully, and the Irish officer carried me into the tent and gave me some tea. And then we went home.

"The next time I saw V. C. was on Sunday at Parade Service. He is on the Staff, and wears a cocked hat. He came in with the General and the A. D. C., who was at church on Tuesday, and I was so glad to see him.

"After church, everybody went about saying 'Good morning,' and 'How hot it was in church!' and V. C. helped me with my crutches, and showed me his cross. And the General came up and spoke to me, and I saw his medals, and he asked how you were, and I said, 'Quite well, thank you.' And then

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he talked to a lady with some little boys dressed like sailors. She said how hot it was in church, and he said, 'I thought the roof was coming off with that last hymn.' And she said, 'My little boys call it the Tug-of-War Hymn; they are very fond of it.' And he said, 'The men seem very fond of it.' And he turned round to an officer I didn't know, and said, 'They ran away from you that last verse but one.' And the officer said, 'Yes, sir, they always do; so I stop the organ and let them have it their own way.'

"I asked Aunt Adelaide, 'Does that officer play the organ?' And she said, 'Yes, and he trains the choir. He's coming in to supper.' So he came. If the officers stay to sermon on Sunday evenings, they are late for mess. So the Chaplain stops after Prayers, and anybody that likes to go out before sermon can. If they stay to sermon, they go to supper with some of the married officers instead of dining at mess.

"So he came. I liked him awfully. He plays like Father, only I think he can play more difficult things.

"He says, 'Tug-of-War Hymn' is the very good name for that hymn, because the men are so fond of it they all sing, and the ones at the bottom of the church 'drag over' the choir and the organ.

"He said, 'I've talked till I'm black in the face, and all to no purpose. It would try the patience of a saint.' So I said, 'Are you a saint?' And he laughed and said, 'No, I'm afraid not; I'm only a kapellmeister.' So I call him 'Kapellmeister.' I do like him.

"I do like the Tug-of-War Hymn. It begins, 'The Son of God goes forth to war.' That's the one. But we have it to a tune of our own, on Saints' Days. The verse the men tug with is, 'A noble army, men and boys.' I think they like it, because it's about the army; and so do I.

"I am, your loving and dutiful son,

"LEONARD.

"P. S.—I call the ones with cocked hats and feathers, 'Cockatoos.' There was another Cockatoo who walked away with the General. Not very big. About the bigness of the stuffed General in that Pawnbroker's window; and I do think he had quite as many medals. I wanted to see them. I wish I had. He looked at me. He had a very gentle face; but I was afraid of it. Was I a coward?

"You remember what these crosses are, don't you? I told you."

LETTER IV

"THIS is a very short letter. It's only to ask you to send my book of Poor Things by the Orderly who takes this, unless you are quite sure you are coming to see me to-day.

"A lot of officers are collecting for me, and there's one in the Engineers can print very well, so he'll put them in.

"A Colonel with only one arm dined here yesterday. You can't think how well he manages, using first his knife and then his fork, and talking so politely all the time. He has all kinds of dodges, so as not to give trouble and do everything for himself. I mean to put him in.

"I wrote to Cousin Alan, and asked him to collect for me. I like writing letters, and I do like getting them. Uncle Henry says he hates a lot of

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posts in the day. I hate posts when there's nothing for me. I like all the rest.

"Cousin Alan wrote back by return. He says he can only think of the old chap, whose legs were cut off in battle:

'And when his legs were smitten off,
He fought upon his stumps!'

It was very brave, if it's true. Do you think it is? He did not tell me his name.

"Your loving and dutiful son,

"LEONARD.

"P. S.—I am *lætus sorte mea*, and so is the Sweep."

LETTER V

"THIS letter is not about a Poor Thing. It's about a saint—a soldier saint—which I and the Chaplain think nearly the best kind. His name was Martin, he got to be a Bishop in the end, but when he first enlisted he was only a catechumen. Do you know what a catechumen is, dear Mother? Perhaps if you're not quite so high-church as the engineer I told you of, who prints so beautifully, you may not know. It means when you've been born a heathen, and are going to be a Christian, only you've not yet been baptized. The engineer has given me a picture of him, St. Martin I mean, and now he has printed underneath it, in beautiful thick black letters that you can hardly read if you don't know what they are, and the very particular words in red, 'Martin—yet but a Catechumen!' He can illuminate, too, though not quite so well as Father, he is very high-church, and I'm high-church, too, and so is our Chaplain, but he is broad as well. The engineer thinks he's rather too broad, but Uncle Henry and Aunt Adelaide think he's quite perfect, and so do I, and so does everybody else. He comes in sometimes, but not very often because he's so busy. He came the other night because I wanted to confess. What I wanted to confess was that I had laughed in church. He is a very big man, and he has a very big surplice, with a great lot of gathers behind, which makes my engineer very angry, because it's the wrong shape, and he preaches splendidly, the Chaplain I mean, straight out of his head, and when all the soldiers are listening he swings his arms about, and the surplice gets in his way, and he catches hold of it, and oh! Mother dear, I must tell you what it reminded me of. When I was very little, and Father used to tie a knot in his big pocket-handkerchief and put his first finger into it to make a head that nodded, and wind the rest round his hand, and stick out his thumb and another finger for arms, and do the 'Yea-verily-man' to amuse you and me. It was last Sunday, and a most splendid sermon, but his stole got round under his ear, and his sleeves did look just like the Yea-verily-man, and I tried not to look, and then I caught the Irish officer's eye and he twinkled, and then I laughed, because I remembered his telling Aunt Adelaide 'That's the grandest old Padrè that ever got up into a pulpit, but did ye ever see a man get so mixed up with his clothes?' I was very sorry when I laughed, so I settled I would confess,

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for my engineer thinks you ought always to confess, so when our Chaplain came in after dinner on Monday, I confessed, but he only laughed, till he broke down Aunt Adelaide's black and gold chair. He is too big for it, really. Aunt Adelaide never lets Uncle Henry sit on it. So he was very sorry, and Aunt Adelaide begged him not to mind, and then in came my engineer in war-paint (if you look up *war-paint* in the Canteen Book I gave you, you'll see what it means). He was in war-paint because he was Orderly Officer for the evening, and he'd got his sword under one arm, and the picture under the other, and his short cloak on to keep it dry, because it was raining. He made the frame himself; he can make Oxford frames quite well, and he's going to teach me how to. Then I said, 'Who is it?' so he told me, and now I'm going to tell you, in case you don't know. Well, St. Martin was born in Hungary, in the year 316. His father and mother were heathens, but when he was about my age he made up his mind he would be a Christian. His father and mother were so afraid of his turning into a monk, that as soon as he was old enough they enlisted him in the army, hoping that would cure him of wanting to be a Christian, but it didn't—Martin wanted to be a Christian just as much as ever; still he got interested with his work and his comrades, and he dawdled on only a Catechumen, and didn't make full profession and get baptized. One winter his corps was quartered at Amiens, and on a very bitter night, near the gates, he saw a half-naked beggar shivering with the cold. (I asked my engineer, 'Was he Orderly Officer for the evening?' but he said, 'More likely on patrol duty, with some of his comrades.' However, he says he won't be sure, for Martin was Tribune, which is very nearly a Colonel, two years afterwards, he knows.) When Martin saw the Beggar at the gate, he pulled out his big military cloak, and drew his sword, and cut it in half, and wrapped half of it round the poor Beggar to keep him warm. I know you'll think him very kind, but wait a bit, that's all. Next night when Martin, the soldier, was asleep he had a vision. Did you ever have a vision? I wish I could! This was Martin's vision. He saw Christ our Lord in Heaven, sitting among the shining hosts, and wearing over one shoulder half a military cloak, and as Martin saw Him he heard Him say, 'Behold the mantle given to Me by Martin—yet but a Catechumen!' After that vision he didn't wait any longer; he was baptized at once.

"Mother dear, I've told you this quite truthfully, but I can't tell it you so *splendidly* as my engineer did, standing with his back to the fire and holding out his cape, and drawing his sword to show me how Martin divided his cloak with the beggar. Aunt Adelaide isn't afraid of swords, she is too used to them, but she says she thinks soldiers do things in huts they would never think of doing in big rooms, just to show how neatly they can manage, without hurting anything. The Chaplain broke the chair, but then he isn't exactly a soldier, and the D. A. Q. M. G. that I told you of, comes in sometimes and says, 'I beg your pardon, Mrs. Jones, but I must,'—and puts both his hands on the end of the sofa, and lifts his body till he gets his legs sticking straight out. They are very long legs, and he and the sofa go nearly across the room, but he never kicks anything, it's a kind of athletics; and there's another officer who comes in at one door and Catherine-wheels right across to the farthest corner, and he is over six foot, too, but they never break anything. We do laugh."

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"I wish you could have seen my engineer doing St. Martin. He had to go directly afterwards, and then the Chaplain came and stood in front of me, on the hearth-rug, in the fire-light, just where my engineer had been standing, and he took up the picture, and looked at it. So I said, 'Do you know about St. Martin?' and he said he did, and he said, 'One of the greatest of those many Soldiers of the Cross who have also fought under earthly banners.' Then he put down the picture, and got hold of his elbow with his hand, as if he was holding his surplice out of the way, and said, 'Great, as well as good, for this reason: he was one of those rare souls to whom the counsels of God are clear, not to the utmost of the times in which he lived—but in advance of those times. Such men are not always popular, nor even largely successful in their day, but the light they hold lightens more generations of this naughty world, than the pious tapers of commoner men. You know that Martin the Catechumen became Martin the Saint—do you know that Martin the Soldier became Martin the Bishop?—and that in an age of credulity and fanaticism, that man of God discredited some relics very popular with the pious in his diocese, and proved and exposed them to be those of an executed robber. Later in life it is recorded of Martin, Bishop of Tours, that he lifted his voice in protest against persecutions for religion, and the punishment of heretics. In the nineteenth century we are little able to judge, how great must have been the faith of that man in the God of truth and of love.' It was like a little sermon, and I think this is exactly how he said it, for I got Aunt Adelaide to write it out for me this morning, and she remembers sermons awfully well. I've been looking St. Martin out in the calendar; his day is the 11th of November. He is not a Collect, Epistle, and Gospel Saint, only one of the Black Letter ones; but the 11th of November is going to be on a Sunday this year, and I am so glad, for I've asked our Chaplain if we may have the Tug-of-War Hymn for St. Martin—and he has given leave.

"It's a long way off; I wish it came sooner. So now, Mother dear, you have time to make your arrangements as you like, but you see that whatever happens, I must be in Camp on St. Martin's Day.

"Your loving and dutiful son,

"LEONARD."

CHAPTER XI

"I have fought a good fight. I have finished my course. I have kept the faith. Henceforth——!"

1 *Tim.* iv. 7.

It was Sunday. Sunday, the tenth of November—St. Martin's Day.

Though it was in November, a summer day. A day of that Little Summer which alternately claims St. Luke and St. Martin

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as its patrons, and is apt to shine its brightest when it can claim both—on the feast of All Saints.

Sunday in camp. With curious points of likeness and unlikeness to English Sundays elsewhere. Like in that general aspect of tidiness and quiet, of gravity and pause, which betrays that a hard-working and very practical people have thought good to keep much of the Sabbath with its Sunday. Like, too, in the little groups of children, gay in Sunday best, and grave with Sunday books, trotting to Sunday School.

Unlike, in that to see all the men are about the place washed and shaved is not, among soldiers, peculiar to Sunday. Unlike, also, in a more festal feeling produced by the gay gatherings of men and officers on Church Parade (far distant be the day when Parade Services shall be abolished!), and by the exhilarating sounds of the Bands with which each regiment marched from its parade-ground to the church.

Here and there small detachments might be met making their way to the Roman Catholic Church in camp, or to places of worship of various denominations in the neighboring town; and on Blind Baby's Parade (where he was prematurely brushing his Sunday frock with his drum-basket in ecstatic sympathy with the bands), a corporal of exceptional views was parading himself and two privates of the same denomination, before marching the three of them to their own peculiar prayer-meeting.

The Brigade for the Iron Church paraded early (the sunshine and sweet air seemed to promote alacrity). And after the men were seated their officers still lingered outside, chatting with the ladies and the Staff, as these assembled by degrees, and sunning themselves in the genial warmth of St. Martin's Little Summer.

The V. C. was talking with the little boys in sailor suits and

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their mother, when the officer who played the organ came towards them.

"Good morning, Kapellmeister!" said two or three voices.

Nicknames were common in the Camp, and this one had been rapidly adopted.

"Ye look cloudy this fine morning, Kapellmeister!" cried the Irish officer. "Got the toothache?"

The Kapellmeister shook his head, and forced a smile which rather intensified than diminished the gloom of a countenance which did not naturally lend itself to lines of levity. Was he not a Scotchman and also a musician? His lips smiled in answer to the chaff, but his somber eyes were fixed on the V. C. They had—as some eyes have—an odd, summoning power, and the V. C. went to meet him.

When he said, "I was in there this morning," the V. C.'s eyes followed the Kapellmeister's to the Barrack Master's hut, and his own face fell.

"He wants the Tug-of-War Hymn," said the Kapellmeister.

"He's not coming to church?"

"Oh, no; but he's set his heart on hearing the Tug-of-War Hymn through his bedroom window; and it seems the Chaplain has promised we shall have it to-day. It's a most amazing thing," added the Kapellmeister, shooting out one arm with a gesture common to him when oppressed by an idea,—"*it's a most amazing thing!* For I think, if I were in my grave, that hymn—as these men bolt with it—might make me turn in my place of rest; but it's the last thing I should care to hear if I were ill in bed! However, he wants it, poor lad, and he asked me to ask you if you would turn outside when it begins, and sing so that he can hear your voice and the words."

"Oh, he can never hear me over there!"

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"He can hear you fast enough! It's quite close. He begged me to ask you, and I was to say it's his last Sunday."

There was a pause. The V. C. looked at the little "Officers' Door," which was close to his usual seat, which always stood open in summer weather, and half in half out of which men often stood in the crush of a Parade Service. There was no difficulty in the matter except his own intense dislike to anything approaching to display. Also he had become more attached than he could have believed possible to the gallant-hearted child whose worship of him had been flattery as delicate as it was sincere. It was no small pain to know that the boy lay dying—a pain he would have preferred to bear in silence.

"Is he very much set upon it?"

"Absolutely."

"Is she—is Lady Jane there?"

"All of them. He can't last the day out."

"When will it be sung—that hymn, I mean?"

"I've put it on after the third Collect."

"All right."

The V. C. took up his sword and went to his seat, and the Kapellmeister took up his and went to the organ.

In the Barrack Master's hut my hero lay dying. His mind was now absolutely clear, but during the night it had wandered—wandered in a delirium that was perhaps some solace of his sufferings, for he had believed himself to be a soldier on active service, bearing the brunt of battle and the pain of wounds; and when fever consumed him, he thought it was the heat of India that parched his throat and scorched his skin, and called again and again in noble raving to imaginary comrades to keep up heart and press forward.

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About four o'clock he sank into stupor, and the Doctor forced Lady Jane to go and lie down, and the Colonel took his wife away to rest also.

At Gun-fire Leonard opened his eyes. For some minutes he gazed straight ahead of him, and the Master of the House, who sat by his bedside, could not be sure whether he were still delirious or no; but when their eyes met he saw that Leonard's senses had returned to him, and kissed the wan little hand that was feeling about for the Sweep's head in silence that he almost feared to break.

Leonard broke in by saying, "When did you bring Uncle Rupert to Camp, Father dear?"

"Uncle Rupert is at home, my darling; and you are in Uncle Henry's hut."

"I know I am; and so is Uncle Rupert. He is at the end of the room there. Can't you see him?"

"No, Len; I only see the wall, with your text on it that poor old Father did for you."

"My 'Goodly heritage,' you mean? I can't see that now. Uncle Rupert is in front of it. I thought you put him there. Only he's out of his frame, and—it's very odd!"

"What's odd, my darling?"

"Someone has wiped away all the tears from his eyes."

.
"Hymn two hundred and sixty-three: 'Fight the good fight of faith.'"

The third Collect was just ended, and a prolonged and somewhat irregular Amen was dying away among the Choir, who were beginning to feel for their hymn-books.

The lack of precision, the "dropping shots" style in which that *Amen* was delivered, would have been more exasperating

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to the Kapellmeister, if his own attention had not been for the moment diverted by anxiety to know if the V. C. remembered that the time had come.

As the Chaplain gave out the hymn, the Kapellmeister gave one glance of an eye, as searching as it was somber, round the corner of that odd little curtain which it is the custom to hang behind an organist; and this sufficing to tell him that the V. C. had not forgotten, he drew out certain very vocal stops, and bending himself to manual and pedal, gave forth the popular melody of the "Tug-of-War" hymn with a precision indicative of a resolution to have it sung in strict time, or know the reason why.

And as nine hundred and odd men rose to their feet with some clatter of heavy boots and accoutrements the V. C. turned quietly out of the crowded church, and stood outside upon the steps, bareheaded in the sunshine of St. Martin's Little Summer, and with the tiniest of hymn-books between his fingers and thumb.

Circumstances had made a soldier of the V. C., but by nature he was a student. When he brought the little hymn-book to his eyes to get a mental grasp of the hymn before he began to sing it, he committed the first four lines to an intelligence sufficiently trained to hold them in remembrance for the brief time that it would take to sing them. Involuntarily his active brain did more, and was crossed by a critical sense of the crude, barbaric taste of childhood, and a wonder what consolation the suffering boy could find in these gaudy lines:—

"The Son of God goes forth to war,
A kingly crown to gain;
His blood-red banner streams afar:
Who follows in His train?"

But when he brought the little hymn-book to his eyes to take in the next four lines, they startled him with the revulsion of a sud-

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den sympathy; and lifting his face towards the Barrack Master's Hut, he sang—as he rarely sang in drawing-rooms, even words the most felicitous to melodies the most sweet—sang not only to the delight of dying ears, but so that the Kapellmeister himself heard him, and smiled as he heard:—

“Who best can drink His cup of woe
Triumphant over pain,
Who patient bears His cross below
He follows in His train.”

On each side of Leonard's bed, like guardian angels, knelt his father and mother. At his feet lay the Sweep, who now and then lifted a long, melancholy nose and anxious eyes.

At the foot of the bed stood the Barrack Master. He had taken up this position at the request of the Master of the House, who had avoided any further allusion to Leonard's fancy that their Naseby ancestor had come to Asholt Camp, but had begged his big brother-in-law to stand there and blot out Uncle Rupert's Ghost with his substantial body.

But whether Leonard perceived the *ruse*, forgot Uncle Rupert, or saw him all the same, by no word or sign did he ever betray.

Near the window sat Aunt Adelaide, with her prayer-book, following the service in her own orderly and pious fashion, sometimes saying a prayer aloud at Leonard's bidding, and anon replying to his oft-repeated inquiry: “Is it the third Collect yet, 'Aunty dear?”

She had turned her head, more quickly than usual, to speak, when, clear and strenuous on vocal stops, came the melody of the “Tug-of-War” hymn.

“There! There it is! Oh, good Kapellmeister! Mother dear,

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please go to the window and see if V. C. is there, and wave your hand to him. Father dear, lift me up a little, please. Ah, now I hear him! Good V. C.! I don't believe you'll sing better than that when you're promoted to be an angel. Are the men singing pretty loud? May I have a little of that stuff to keep me from coughing, Mother dear? You know I am not impatient; but I do hope, please God, I sha'n't die till I've just heard them *tug* that verse once more!"

The sight of Lady Jane had distracted the V. C.'s thoughts from the hymn. He was singing mechanically, when he became conscious of some increasing pressure and irregularity in the time. Then he remembered what it was. The soldiers were beginning to tug.

In a moment more the organ stopped, and the V. C. found himself, with over three hundred men at his back, singing without accompaniment, and in unison—

"A noble army—men and boys,
The matron and the maid,
Around their Saviour's throne rejoice,
In robes of white arrayed."

The Kapellmeister conceded that verse to the shouts of the congregation; but he invariably reclaimed control over the last.

Even now, as the men paused to take breath after their "tug," the organ spoke again, softly, but seraphically, and clearer and sweeter above the voices behind him rose the voice of the V. C., singing to his little friend—

"They climbed the steep ascent of Heaven,
Through peril, toil, and pain"—

The men sang on; but the V. C. stopped, as if he had been shot.

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For a man's hand had come to the Barrack Master's window and pulled the white blind down.

CHAPTER XII

"He that hath found some fledged-bird's nest may know
At first sight, if the bird be flown;
But what fair dell or grove he sings in now,
That is to him unknown."—*Henry Vaughan*.

TRUE to its character as an emblem of human life, the Camp stands on, with all its little manners and customs, whilst the men who garrison it pass rapidly away.

Strange as the vicissitudes of a whole generation elsewhere, are the changes and chances that a few years bring to those who were stationed there together.

To what unforeseen celebrity (or to a dropping out of one's life and even hearsay that once seemed quite as little likely) do one's old neighbors sometimes come! They seem to pass in a few drill seasons as other men pass by lifetimes. Some to foolishness and forgetfulness, and some to fame. This old acquaintance to unexpected glory, that dear friend—alas!—to the grave. And some—God speed them!—to the world's end and back, following the drum till it leads them Home again, with familiar faces little changed—with boys and girls, perchance, very greatly changed—and with hearts not changed at all. Can the last parting do much to hurt such friendships between good souls, who have so long learned to say farewell; to love in absence, to trust through silence, and to have faith in reunion?

The Barrack Master's appointment was an unusually permanent one; and he and his wife lived on in Asholt Camp, and saw regiments come and go, as O'Reilly had prophesied, and

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threw out additional rooms and bow-windows, and took in more garden, and kept a cow on a bit of Government grass beyond the stores, and—with the man who did the roofs, the church orderly, and one or two public characters—came to be reckoned among the oldest inhabitants.

George went away pretty soon with his regiment. He was a good, straightforward young fellow, with a dogged devotion to duty, and a certain provincialism of intellect, and general John Bullishness, which he inherited from his father, who had inherited it from his country forefathers. He inherited equally a certain romantic, instinctive, and immovable highmindedness, not invariably characteristic of much more brilliant men.

He had been very fond of his little cousin, and Leonard's death was a natural grief to him. The funeral tried his fortitude, and his detestation of "scenes," to the very uttermost.

Like most young men who had the honor to know her, George's devotion to his beautiful and gracious aunt, Lady Jane, had had in it something of the nature of worship; but now he was almost glad he was going away, and not likely to see her face for a long time, because it made him feel miserable to see her, and he objected to feeling miserable both on principle and in practice. His peace of mind was assailed, however, from a wholly unexpected quarter, and one which pursued him even more abroad than at home.

The Barrack Master's son had been shocked by his cousin's death; but the shock was really and truly greater when he discovered, by chance gossip, and certain society indications, that the calamity which left Lady Jane childless had made him his uncle's presumptive heir. The almost physical disgust which the discovery that he had thus acquired some little social prestige produced in this subaltern of a marching regiment must be hard

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to comprehend by persons of more imagination and less sturdy independence, or by scholars in the science of success. But man differs widely from man, and it is true.

He had been nearly two years in Canada when "the English mail" caused him to fling his fur cap into the air with such demonstrations of delight as greatly aroused the curiosity of his comrades, and, as he bolted to his quarters without further explanation than "Good news from home!" a rumor was for some time current that "Jones had come into his fortune."

Safe in his own quarters, he once more applied himself to his mother's letter, and picked up the thread of a passage which ran thus:—

"Your dear father gets very impatient, and I long to be back in my hut again and see after my flowers, which I can trust to no one since O'Reilly took his discharge. The little conservatory is like a new toy to me, but it is very tiny, and your dear father is worse than no use in it, as he says himself. However, I can't leave Lady Jane till she is quite strong. The baby is a noble little fellow and really beautiful—which I know you won't believe, but that's because you know nothing about babies: not as beautiful as Leonard, of course—that could never be—but a fine, healthy, handsome boy, with eyes that do remind one of his darling brother. I know, dear George, how greatly you always did admire and appreciate your Aunt. Not one bit too much, my son. She is the noblest woman I have ever known. We have had a very happy time together, and I pray it may please God to spare this child to be the comfort to her that you are and have been to

"Your loving
MOTHER."

This was the good news from home that had sent the young subaltern's fur cap into the air, and that now sent him to his desk; the last place where, as a rule, he enjoyed himself. Poor scribe as he was, however, he wrote two letters then and there: one to his mother, and one of impetuous congratulation to his uncle, full of messages to Lady Jane.

The Master of the House read the letter more than once. It pleased him.

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In his own way he was quite as unworldly as his nephew, but it was chiefly from a philosophic contempt for many things that worldly folk struggle for, and a connoisseurship in sources of pleasure not purchasable except by the mentally endowed, and not even valuable to George, as he knew. And he was a man of the world, and a somewhat cynical student of character.

After the third reading he took it, smiling, to Lady Jane's morning-room, where she was sitting, looking rather pale, with her fine hair "coming down" over a tea-gown of strange tints of her husband's choosing, and with a new baby lying in her lap.

He shut the door noiselessly, took a footstool to her feet, and kissed her hand.

"You look like a Romney, Jane,—an unfinished Romney, for you are too white. If you've got a headache, you sha'n't hear this letter, which I know you'd like to hear."

"I see that I should. Canada postmarks. It's George."

"Yes; it's George. He's uproariously delighted at the advent of this little chap."

"Oh, I knew he'd be that. Let me hear what he says."

The Master of the House read the letter. Lady Jane's eyes filled with tears at the tender references to Leonard, but she smiled through them.

"He's a dear, good fellow."

"He *is* a dear, good fellow. It's a most *borné* intellect, but excellence itself. And I'm bound to say," added the Master of the House, driving his hands through the jungle of his hair, "that there is a certain excellence about a soldier when he is a good fellow that seems to be a thing *per se*."

After meditating on this matter for some moments, he sprang up and vigorously rang the bell.

"Jane, you're terribly white; you can bear nothing. Nurse

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is to take that brat at once, and I'm going to carry you into the garden."

Always much given to the collection and care of precious things, and apt also to change his fads and to pursue each with partiality for the moment, the Master of the House had, for some time past, been devoting all his thoughts and his theories to the preservation of a possession not less valuable than the paragon of Chippendale chairs, and much more destructible—he was taking care of his good wife.

Many family treasures are lost for lack of a little timely care and cherishing, and there are living "examples" as rare as most bric-à-brac, and quite as perishable. Lady Jane was one of them, and after Leonard's death, with no motive for keeping up, she sank into a condition of weakness so profound that it became evident that, unless her failing forces were fostered, she would not long be parted from her son.

Her husband had taken up his poem again, to divert his mind from his own grief; but he left it behind, and took Lady Jane abroad.

Once roused, he brought to the task of coaxing her back to life an intelligence that generally insured the success of his aims, and he succeeded now. Lady Jane got well; out of sheer gratitude, she said.

Leonard's military friends do not forget him. They are accustomed to remember the absent.

With the death of his little friend the V. C. quits these pages. He will be found in the pages of history.

The Kapellmeister is a fine organist, and a few musical members of the congregation, of all ranks, have a knack of lingering after Even-song at the Iron Church to hear him "play away the people." But on the Sunday after Leonard's death the congre-

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gation rose and remained *en masse* as the Dead March from Saul spoke in solemn and familiar tones the requiem of a hero's soul.

Blind Baby's father was a Presbyterian, and disapproved of organs, but he was a fond parent, and his blind child had heard tell that the officer who played the organ so grandly was to play the Dead March on the Sabbath evening for the little gentleman that died on the Sabbath previous, and he was wild to go and hear it. Then the service would be past, and the Kapellmeister was a fellow-Scot, and the house of mourning has a powerful attraction for that serious race, and for one reason or another Corporal Macdonald yielded to the point of saying, "Aweel, if you're a gude bairn, I'll tak' ye to the kirk door, and ye may lay your lug at the chink, and hear what ye can."

But when they got there the door was open, and Blind Baby pushed his way through the crowd, as if the organ had drawn him with a rope, straight to the Kapellmeister's side.

It was the beginning of a friendship much to Blind Baby's advantage, which did not end when the child had been sent to a Blind School, and then to a college where he learned to be a tuner, and "earned his own living."

Poor Jemima fretted so bitterly for the loss of the child she had nursed with such devotion, that there was possibly some truth in O'Reilly's rather complicated assertion that he married her because he could not bear to see her cry.

He took his discharge, and was installed by the Master of the House as lodge-keeper at the gates through which he had so often passed as "a tidy one."

Freed from military restraints, he became a very untidy one indeed, and grew hair in such reckless abundance that he came to look like an ourang-outang with an unusually restrained figure and exceptionally upright carriage.

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He was the best of husbands every day in the year but the seventeenth of March; and Jemima enjoyed herself very much as she boasted to the wives of less handy civilians that "her man was as good as a woman about the house, any day." (Any day, that is, except the seventeenth of March.)

With window-plants cunningly and ornamentally enclosed by a miniature paling and gate, as if the window-sill were a hut garden; with colored tissue-paper fly-catchers made on the principle of barrack-room Christmas decorations; with shelves, brackets, Oxford frames, and other efforts of the decorative joinery of O'Reilly's evenings; with a large, hard sofa, chairs, elbow-chairs, and antimacassars; and with a round table in the middle—the Lodge parlor is not a room to live in, but it is almost bewildering to peep into, and curiously like the shrine of some departed saint, so highly framed are the photographs of Leonard's lovely face, and so numerous are his relics.

The fate of Leonard's dog may not readily be guessed.

The gentle reader would not deem it unnatural were I to chronicle that he died of a broken heart. Failing this excess of sensibility, it seems obvious that he should have attached himself immovably to Lady Jane, and have lived at ease and died full of dignity in his little master's ancestral halls. He did go back there for a short time, but the day after the funeral he disappeared. When word came to the household that he was missing and had not been seen since he was let out in the morning, the butler put on his hat and hurried off with a beating heart to Leonard's grave.

But the Sweep was not there, dead or alive. He was at that moment going at a sling trot along the dusty road that led into the Camp. Timid persons, imperfectly acquainted with dogs, avoided him; he went so very straight, it looked like hydrophobia; men who knew better, and saw that he was only "on urgent pri-

vate affairs," chaffed him as they passed, and some with little canes and horseplay waylaid and tried to intercept him. But he was a big dog, and made himself respected, and pursued his way.

His way was to the Barrack Master's hut.

The first room he went into was that in which Leonard died. He did not stay there three minutes. Then he went to Leonard's own room, the little one next to the kitchen, and this he examined exhaustively, crawling under the bed, snuffing at both doors, and lifting his long nose against hope to investigate impossible places, such as the top of the military chest of drawers. Then he got on to the late General's camp bed and went to sleep.

He was awakened by the smell of the bacon frying for breakfast, and he had breakfast with the family. After this he went out, and was seen by different persons at various places in the Camp, the General Parade, the Stores, and the Iron Church, still searching.

He was invited to dinner in at least twenty different barrack-rooms, but he rejected all overtures till he met O'Reilly, when he turned round and went back to dine with him and his comrades.

He searched Leonard's room once more, and not finding him, he refused to make his home with the Barrack Master; possibly because he could not make up his mind to have a home at all till he could have one with Leonard.

Half-a-dozen of Leonard's officer friends would willingly have adopted him, but he would not own another master. Then military dogs are apt to attach themselves exclusively either to commissioned or to non-commissioned soldiers, and the Sweep cast in his lot with the men, and slept on old coats in corners of barracks-rooms, and bided his time. Dogs' masters do get called away suddenly and *come back again*. The Sweep had his hopes, and did not commit himself.

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Even if, at length, he realized that Leonard had passed beyond this life's outposts, it roused in him no instincts to return to the Hall. With a somewhat sublime contempt for those shreds of poor mortality laid to rest in the family vault, he elected to live where his little master had been happiest—in Asholt Camp.

Now and then he became excited. It was when a fresh regiment marched in. On these occasions he invariably made so exhaustive an examination of the regiment and its baggage, as led to his being more or less forcibly adopted by half-a-dozen good-natured soldiers who had had to leave their previous pets behind them. But when he found that Leonard had not returned with that detachment, he shook off everybody and went back to O'Reilly.

When O'Reilly married, he took the Sweep to the Lodge, who thereupon instituted a search about the house and grounds; but it was evident that he had not expected any good results, and when he did not find Leonard he went away quickly down the old Elm Avenue. As he passed along the dusty road that led to Camp for the last time, he looked back now and again with sad eyes to see if O'Reilly was not coming, too. Then he returned to the Barrack Room, where he was greeted with uproarious welcome, and eventually presented with a new collar by subscription. And so, rising with gun-fire and resting with "lights out," he lived and died a soldier's dog.

The new heir thrives at the Hall. He has brothers and sisters to complete the natural happiness of his home, he has good health, good parents, and is having a good education. He will have a goodly heritage. He is developing nearly as vigorous a fancy for soldiers as Leonard had, and drills his brothers and sisters with the help of O'Reilly. If he wishes to make arms his profession

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he will not be thwarted, for the Master of the House has decided that it is in many respects a desirable and wholesome career for an eldest son. Lady Jane may yet have to buckle on a hero's sword. Brought up by such a mother in the fear of God, he ought to be good, he may live to be great, it's odds if he cannot be happy. But never, not in the "one crowded hour of glorious" victory, not in years of the softest comforts of a peaceful home, by no virtues and in no success shall he bear more fitly than his crippled brother bore the ancient motto of their house:

"Lætus Sorte Mea."

“SO-SO”

“BE sure, my child,” said the widow to her little daughter, “that you always do just as you are told.”

“Very well, Mother.”

“Or, at any rate, do what will do just as well,” said the small house-dog as he lay blinking at the fire.

“You darling!” cried little Joan, and she sat down on the hearth and hugged him. But he got up and shook himself, and moved three turns nearer the oven, to be out of the way; for though her arms were soft she had kept her doll in them, and that was made of wood, which hurts.

“What a dear, kind house-dog you are!” said little Joan, and she meant what she said, for it does feel nice to have the sharp edges of one’s duty a little softened off for one.

He was no particular kind of a dog, but he was very smooth to stroke, and had a nice way of blinking with his eyes, which it was soothing to see. There had been a difficulty about his name. The name of the house-dog before him was Faithful, and well it became him, as his tombstone testified. The one before that was called Wolf. He was very wild, and ended his days on the gallows, for worrying sheep. The little house-dog never chased anything to the widow’s knowledge. There was no reason whatever for giving him a bad name, and she thought of several good ones,

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such as Faithful, and Trusty, and Keeper, which are fine old-fashioned titles, but none of these seemed quite perfectly to suit him. So he was called So-so; and a very nice soft name it is.

The widow was only a poor woman, though she contrived by her industry to keep a decent home together, and to get now one and now another little comfort for herself and her child.

One day she was going out on business, and she called her little daughter and said to her, "I am going out for two hours. You are too young to protect yourself and the house, and So-so is not as strong as Faithful was. But when I go, shut the house-door and bolt the big wooden bar, and be sure that you do not open it for any reason whatever till I return. If strangers come, So-so may bark, which he can do as well as a bigger dog. Then they will go away. With this summer's savings I have bought a quilted petticoat for you and a duffle cloak for myself against the winter, and if I get the work I am going after to-day, I shall buy enough wool to knit warm stockings for us both. So be patient till I return, and then we will have the plum-cake that is in the cupboard for tea."

"Thank you, Mother."

"Good-bye, my child. Be sure and do just as I have told you," said the widow.

"Very well, Mother."

Little Joan laid down her doll, and shut the house-door, and fastened the big bolt. It was very heavy, and the kitchen looked gloomy when she had done it.

"I wish Mother had taken us all three with her, and had locked the house and put the key in her big pocket, as she has done before," said little Joan, as she got into the rocking-chair, to put her doll to sleep.

“SO-SO”

“Yes, it would have done just as well,” So-so replied, as he stretched himself on the hearth.

Bye-and-bye Joan grew tired of hushabying the doll, who looked none the sleepier for it, and she took the three-legged stool and sat down in front of the clock to watch the hands. After awhile she drew a deep sigh.

“There are sixty seconds in every single minute, So-so,” said she.

“So I have heard,” said So-so. He was snuffing in the back place, which was not usually allowed.

“And sixty whole minutes in every hour, So-so.”

“You don’t say so!” growled So-so. He had not found a bit, and the cake was on the top shelf. There was not so much as a spilled crumb, though he snuffed in every corner of the kitchen till he stood snuffing under the house-door.

“The air smells fresh,” he said.

“It’s a beautiful day, I know,” said little Joan. “I wish Mother had allowed us to sit on the doorstep. We could have taken care of the house——”

“Just as well,” said So-so.

Little Joan came to smell the air at the keyhole, and, as So-so had said, it smelt very fresh. Besides, one could see from the window how fine the evening was.

“It’s not exactly what Mother told us to do,” said Joan, “but I do believe——”

“It would do just as well,” said So-so.

Bye-and-bye little Joan unfastened the bar, and opened the door, and she and the doll and So-so went out and sat on the doorstep.

Not a stranger was to be seen. The sun shone delightfully. An evening sun, and not too hot. All day it had been ripening

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the corn in the field close by, and this glowed and waved in the breeze.

"It does just as well, and better," said little Joan, "for if anyone comes we can see him coming up the field-path."

"Just so," said So-so, blinking in the sunshine.

Suddenly Joan jumped up.

"Oh!" cried she, "there's a bird, a big bird. Dear So-so, can you see him? I can't, because of the sun. What a queer noise he makes. Crake! crake! Oh, I can see him now! He is not flying, he is running, and he has gone into the corn. I do wish I were in the corn, I would catch him, and put him in a cage."

"I'll catch him," said So-so, and he put up his tail, and started off.

"No, no!" cried Joan. "You are not to go. You must stay and take care of the house, and bark if anyone comes."

"You could scream, and that would do just as well," replied So-so, with his tail still up.

"No, it wouldn't," cried little Joan.

"Yes, it would," reiterated So-so.

Whilst they were bickering, an old woman came up to the door; she had a brown face, and black hair, and a very old red cloak.

"Good evening, my little dear," said she. "Are you all at home this fine evening?"

"Only three of us," said Joan; "I, and my doll, and So-so. Mother has gone to the town on business, and we are taking care of the house, but So-so wants to go after the bird we saw run into the corn."

"Was it a pretty bird, my little dear?" asked the old woman.

"It was a very curious one," said Joan, "and I should like to go after it myself, but we can't leave the house."



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"GOOD EVENING, MY LITTLE DEAR," SAID SHE.

“SO-SO”

“Dear, dear! Is there no neighbor would sit on the doorstep for you and keep the house till you just slip down to the field after the curious bird?” said the old woman.

“I’m afraid not,” said little Joan. “Old Martha, our neighbor, is now bedridden. Of course, if she had been able to mind the house instead of us, it would have done just as well.”

“I have some distance to go this evening,” said the old woman, “but I do not object to a few minutes’ rest, and sooner than that you should lose the bird I will sit on the doorstep to oblige you, while you run down to the cornfield.”

“But can you bark if anyone comes?” asked little Joan. “For if you can’t, So-so must stay with you.”

“I can call you and the dog if I see anyone coming, and that will do just as well,” said the old woman.

“So it will,” replied little Joan, and off she ran to the cornfield, where, for that matter, So-so had run before her, and was bounding and barking and springing among the wheat-stalks.

They did not catch the bird, though they stayed longer than they had intended, and though So-so seemed to know more about hunting than was supposed.

“I daresay Mother has come home,” said little Joan, as they went back up the field-path. “I hope she won’t think we ought to have stayed in the house.”

“It was taken care of,” said So-so, “and that must do just as well.”

When they reached the house, the widow had not come home.

But the old woman had gone, and she had taken the quilted petticoat and the duffle cloak, and the plumcake from the top shelf away with her; and no more was ever heard of any of the lot.

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"For the future, my child," said the widow, "I hope you will always do just as you are told, whatever So-so may say."

"I will, Mother," said little Joan. (And she did.) But the house-dog sat and blinked. He dared not speak, he was in disgrace.

I do not feel quite sure about So-so. Wild dogs often amend their ways far on this side of the gallows, and the Faithful sometimes fall; but when anyone begins by being only So-so, he is very apt to be So-so to the end. So-sos so seldom change.

But this one was *very* soft and nice, and he got no cake that tea-time. On the whole we will hope that he lived to be a Good Dog ever after.

A VERY ILL-TEMPERED FAMILY

CHAPTER I

A FAMILY FAILING

WE are a very ill-tempered family.

I want to say it, and not to unsay it by any explanations, because I think it is good for us to face the fact in the unadorned form in which it probably presents itself to the minds of our friends.

Amongst ourselves we have always admitted it by pieces, as it were, or in negative propositions. We allow that we are firm of disposition; we know that we are straightforward; we show what we feel. We have opinions and principles of our own; we are not so thick-skinned as some good people, nor as cold-blooded as others.

When two of us quarreled (and Nurse used to say that no two of us ever agreed), the provocation always seemed, to each of us, great enough amply to excuse the passion. But I have reason to think that people seldom exclaimed, "What grievances those poor children are exasperated with!" but that they often said, "What terrible tempers they all have!"

There are five of us: Philip and I are the eldest; we are twins. My name is Isobel, and I never allow it to be shortened into the ugly word *Bella*, nor into the still more hideous word

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Izzy, by either the servants or the children. My aunt Isobel never would, and neither will I.

"The children" are the other three. They are a good deal younger than Philip and I, so we have always kept them in order. I do not mean that we taught them to behave wonderfully well, but I mean that we made them give way to us elder ones. Among themselves they squabbled dreadfully.

We are a very ill-tempered family.

CHAPTER II

ILL-TEMPERED PEOPLE AND THEIR FRIENDS—NARROW ESCAPES— THE HATCHET-QUARREL

I do not wish for a moment to defend ill-temper, but I do think that people who suffer from ill-tempered people often talk as if they were the only ones who do suffer in the matter; and as if the ill-tempered people themselves quite enjoyed being in a rage.

And yet how much misery is endured by those who have never got the victory over their own ill-temper! To feel wretched and exasperated by little annoyances which good-humored people get over with a shrug or a smile; to have things rankle in my mind like a splinter in the flesh, which glide lightly off yours, and leave no mark; to be unable to bear a joke, knowing that one is doubly laughed at because one can't; to have this deadly sore at heart—"I *cannot* forgive; I *cannot* forget," there is no pleasure in these things. The tears of sorrow are not more bitter than the tears of anger, of hurt pride or thwarted will. As to the fit of passion in which one is giddy, blind, and deaf, if there is a relief to the overcharged mind in saying the sharpest things and hitting

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the heaviest blows one can at the moment, the pleasantness is less than momentary, for almost as we strike we foresee the pains of regret and of humbling ourselves to beg pardon which must ensue. Our friends do not always pity as well as blame us, though they are sorry for those who were possessed by devils long ago.

Good-tempered people, too, who I fancy would find it quite easy not to be provoking, and to be a little patient and forbearing, really seem sometimes to irritate hot-tempered ones on purpose, as if they thought it was good for them to get used to it.

I do not mean that I think ill-tempered people should be constantly yielded to, as Nurse says Mrs. Rampant and the servants have given way to Mr. Rampant till he has got to be quite as unreasonable and nearly as dangerous as most maniacs, and his friends never cross him, for the same reason that they would not stir up a mad bull.

Perhaps I do not quite know how I would have our friends treat us who are cursed with bad tempers. I think to avoid unnecessary provocation, and to be patient with us in the height of our passion is wise as well as kind. But no principle should be conceded to us, and rights that we have unjustly attacked should be faithfully defended when we are calm enough to listen. I fancy that where gentle Mrs. Rampant is wrong is that she allows Mr. Rampant to think that what really are concessions to his weakness are concessions to his wisdom. And what is not founded on truth cannot do lasting good. And if, years ago, before he became a sort of gunpowder cask at large, he had been asked if he wished Mrs. Rampant to persuade herself, and Mrs. Rampant, the little Rampants, and the servants to combine to persuade him that he was right when he was wrong, and wise when he was foolish, and reasonable when he was unjust, I think he would have said No. I do not believe one could deliberately

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desire to be befooled by one's family for all the best years of one's life. And yet how many people are!

I do not think I am ever likely to be so loved and feared by those I live with as to have my ill-humors made into laws. I hope not. But I am sometimes thankful, on the other hand, that God is more forbearing with us than we commonly are with each other, and does not lead us into temptation when we are at our worst and weakest.

Anyone who has a bad temper must sometimes look back at the years before he learned self-control, and feel thankful that he is not a murderer, or burdened for life by the weight on his conscience of some calamity of which he was the cause. If the knife which furious Fred threw at his sister before he was out of petticoats had hit the child's eye instead of her forehead, could he ever have looked into the blinded face without a pang? If the blow with which impatient Annie flattered herself she was correcting her younger brother had thrown the naughty little lad out of the boat instead of into the sailor's arms, and he had been drowned—at ten years old a murderess, how could she endure for life the weight of her unavailing remorse?

I very nearly killed Philip once. It makes me shudder to think of it, and I often wonder I ever could lose my temper again.

We were eight years old, and out in the garden together. We had settled to build a moss-house for my dolls, and had borrowed the hatchet out of the wood-house, without leave, to chop the stakes with. It was entirely my idea, and I had collected all the moss and most of the sticks. It was I, too, who had taken the hatchet. Philip had been very tiresome about not helping me in the hard part; but when I had driven in the sticks by leaning on them with all my weight, and had put in bits of brushwood

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where the mass fell out and Philip laughed at me, and in short, when the moss-house was beginning to look quite real, Philip was very anxious to work at it, and wanted the hatchet.

"You wouldn't help me over the hard work," said I, "so I sha'n't give it you now; I'll make my moss-house myself."

"No you won't," said Philip.

"Yes I shall," said I.

"No you won't," he reiterated; "for I shall pull it down as fast as you build it."

"You'd better not," I threatened.

Just then we were called in to dinner. I hid the hatchet, and Philip said no more, but he got out before me, and when I returned to work I found that the moss-house walls, which had cost me so much labor, were pulled to pieces and scattered about the shrubbery. Philip was not to be seen.

My heart had been so set upon my project that at first I could only feel the overwhelming disappointment. I was not a child who often cried, but I burst into tears.

I was sobbing my hardest when Philip sprang upon me in triumph, and laughing at my distress.

"I kept my promise," said he, tossing his head, "and I'll go on doing it."

I am sure those shocks of fury which seize one like a fit must be a devil possessing one. In an instant my eyes were as dry as the desert in a hot wind, and my head reeling with passion. I ran to the hatchet, and came back brandishing it.

"If you touch one stake or bit of moss of mine again," said I, "I'll throw my hatchet at your head. I can keep promises, too."

My intention was only to frighten him. I relied on his not daring to brave such a threat; unhappily he relied on my not

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daring to carry it out. He took up some of my moss and threw it at me by way of reply.

I flung the hatchet!——

My Aunt Isobel has a splendid figure, with such grace and power as one might expect from her strong health and ready mind. I had not seen her at the moment, for I was blind with passion, nor had Philip, for his back was turned towards her. I did not see distinctly how she watched, as one watches for a ball, and caught the hatchet within a yard of Philip's head.

My Aunt Isobel has a temper much like the temper of the rest of the family. When she had caught it in her left hand she turned round and boxed my ears with her right hand till I could see less than ever. (I believe she suffered for that outburst for months afterwards. She was afraid she had damaged my hearing, as that sense is too often damaged or destroyed by the blows of ill-tempered parents, teachers, and nurses.)

Then she turned back and shook Philip as vigorously as she had boxed me. "I saw you, you spiteful, malicious boy!" said my Aunt Isobel.

All the time she was shaking him, Philip was looking at her feet. Something that he saw absorbed his attention so fully that he forgot to cry.

"You're bleeding, Aunt Isobel," said he, when she gave him breath enough to speak.

The truth was this: the nervous force which Aunt Isobel had summoned up to catch the hatchet seemed to cease when it was caught; her arm fell powerless, and the hatchet cut her ankle. That left arm was useless for many months afterwards, to my abiding reproach.

Philip was not hurt, but he might have been killed. Everybody told me so often that it was a warning to me to correct my

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terrible temper, that I might have revolted against the reiteration if the facts had been less grave. But I never can feel lightly about that hatchet-quarrel. It opened a gulf of possible wickedness and life-long misery, over the brink of which my temper would have dragged me, but for Aunt Isobel's strong arm and keen eye, and over which it might succeed in dragging me any day, unless I could cure myself of my besetting sin.

I never denied it. It was a warning.

CHAPTER III

WARNINGS—MY AUNT ISOBEL—MR. RAMPANT'S TEMPER, AND HIS CONSCIENCE

I WAS not the only scarecrow held up before my own mind.

Nurse had a gallery of historical characters, whom she kept as beacons to warn our stormy passions of their fate. The hot-tempered boy who killed his brother when they were at school; the hot-tempered farmer who took his gun to frighten a trespasser, and ended by shooting him; the young lady who destroyed the priceless porcelain in a pet; the hasty young gentleman who kicked his favorite dog and broke its ribs;—they were all warnings: so was old Mr. Rampant, so was my Aunt Isobel.

Aunt Isobel's story was a whispered tradition of the nursery for many years before she and I were so intimate, in consequence of her goodness and kindness to me, that one day I was bold enough to say to her, "Aunt Isobel, is it true that the reason why you never married is because you and he quarreled, and you were very angry, and he went away, and he was drowned at sea?"

Child as I was, I do not think I should have been so indelicate as to have asked this question if I had not come to fancy

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that nurse made out the story worse than it really was, for my behoof. Aunt Isobel was so cheerful and bright with us!—and I was not at that time able to believe that any one could mend a broken heart with other people's interests so that the marks should show so little!

My aunt had a very clear skin, but in an instant her face was thick with a heavy blush, and she was silent. I marveled that these were the only signs of displeasure she allowed herself to betray, for the question was no sooner out of my mouth than I wished it unsaid, and felt how furious she must naturally feel to hear that her sad and sacred story was bandied between servants and children as a nursery-tale with a moral to it.

But, oh, Aunt Isobel! Aunt Isobel! you had at this time progressed far along that hard but glorious road of self-conquest which I had hardly found my way to.

"I beg your pardon," I began, before she spoke.

"You ought to," said my aunt—she never spoke less than decisively—"I thought you had more tact, Isobel, than to tell anyone what servants have said of one's sins or sorrows behind one's back."

"I am *very* sorry," I repeated with shame; "but the thing is I didn't believe it was true, you always seem so happy. I am *very* sorry."

"It is true," said Aunt Isobel. "Child, whilst we are speaking of it—for the first and the last time—let it be a warning for you to illustrate a very homely proverb: 'Don't cut off your nose to spite your own face.' Ill-tempered people are always doing it, and I did it to my life-long loss. I *was* angry with him, and like Jonah I said to myself, 'I do well to be angry.' And though I would die twenty deaths harder than the death he died to see his face for five minutes and be forgiven, I am not weak enough to

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warp my judgment with my misery. I was in the right, and he was in the wrong. But I forgot how much harder a position it is to be in the wrong than in the right in a quarrel. I did not think of how, instead of making the return path difficult to those who err, we ought to make it easy, as God does for us. I gave him no chance of unsaying with grace or credit what he could not fail to regret that he had said. Isobel, you have a clear head and a sharp tongue, as I have. You will understand when I say that I had the satisfaction of proving that I was in the right and he was in the wrong, and that I was firmly, conscientiously determined to make no concessions, no half-way advances, though our Father *goes to meet* His prodigals. Merciful Heaven! I had the satisfaction of parting myself for all these slow years from the most honest—tenderest-hearted——”

My Aunt Isobel had overrated her strength. After a short and vain struggle in silence she got up and went slowly out of the room, resting her hand for an instant on my little knick-knack table by the door as she went out—the only time I ever saw her lean upon anything.

Old Mr. Rampant was another of my “warnings.” He—to whose face no one dared hint that he could ever be in the wrong—would have been more astonished than Aunt Isobel to learn how plainly—nay, how contemptuously—the servants spoke behind his back of his unbridled temper and its results. They knew that the only son was somewhere on the other side of the world, and that little Mrs. Rampant wept tears for him and sent money to him in secret, and they had no difficulty in deciding why: “He’d got his father’s temper, and it stood to reason that he and the old gentleman couldn’t put up their horses together.” The moral was not obscure. From no lack of affection, but for want of

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self-control, the son was condemned to homelessness and hardships in his youth, and the father was sonless in his old age.

But that was not the point of Nurse's tales about Mr. Rampant which impressed me most, nor even the endless anecdotes of his unreasonable passions which leaked out at his back-door and came up our back-stairs to the nursery. They rather amused us. That assault on the butcher's boy, who brought ribs of beef instead of sirloin, for which he was summoned and fined; his throwing the dinner out of the window, and going to dine at the village inn, by which the dogs ate the dinner—and he had to pay for two dinners, and to buy new plates and dishes.

We laughed at these things, but in my serious moments, especially on the first Sunday of the month, I was haunted by something else which Nurse had told me about old Mr. Rampant.

In our small parish—a dull village on the edge of a marsh—the Holy Communion was only celebrated once a month. It was not because he was irreligious that old Mr. Rampant was one of the too numerous non-communicants. "It's his temper, poor gentleman," said Nurse. "He can't answer for himself, and he has that religious feeling he wouldn't like to come unless he was fit. The housekeeper overheard Mrs. Rampant a-begging of him last Christmas. It was no listening either, for he bellowed at her like a bull, and swore dreadful that whatever else he was he wouldn't be profane."

"Couldn't he keep his temper for a week, don't you think?" said I sadly, thinking of my mother's old copy of the 'Week's Preparation' for the Lord's Supper.

"It would be as bad if he got into one of his tantrums directly afterwards," said Nurse; "and with people pestering for Christmas-boxes, and the pudding and turkey, and so many things that

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might go wrong, it would be as likely as not he would. It's a sad thing, too," she added, "for his neck's terribly short, and they say all his family have gone suddenly with the apoplexy. It's an awful thing, Miss Isobel, to be taken sudden—and unprepared."

The awe of it came back on me every month when the fair white linen covered the rustiness of the old velvet altar-cloth which the marsh damps were rotting, and the silver vessels shone, and the village organist played out the non-communicants with a somewhat inappropriate triumphal march, and little Mrs. Rampant knelt on with buried face as we went out, and Mr. Rampant came out with us, looking more glum than usual, and with such a short neck!

Now I think poor Mr. Rampant was wrong, and that he ought to have gone with Mrs. Rampant to the Lord's Supper that Christmas. He might have found grace to have got through all the little ups and downs and domestic disturbances of a holiday season without being very ferocious; and if he had tried and failed I think God would have forgiven him. And he might—it is possible that he *might*—during that calm and solemn Communion, have forgiven his son as he felt that Our Father forgave him. So Aunt Isobel says; and I have good reason to think that she is likely to be right.

I think so, too, *now*, but *then* I was simply impressed by the thought that an ill-tempered person was, as Nurse expressed it, "unfit" to join in the highest religious worship. It is true that I was also impressed by her other saying, "It's an awful thing, Miss Isobel, to be taken sudden and unprepared;" but there was a temporary compromise in my own case. I could not be a communicant till I was confirmed.

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CHAPTER IV

CASES OF CONSCIENCE—ETHICS OF ILL-TEMPER

CONFIRMATIONS were not very frequent in our little village at this time. About once in three years the Bishop came to us. He came when I was twelve years old. Opinions were divided as to whether I was old enough, but I decided the matter by saying I would rather wait till the next opportunity.

"I may be more fit by that time," was my thought, and it was probably not unlike some of Mr. Rampant's self-communings.

The time came, and the Bishop also; I was fifteen.

I do not know why, but nobody had proposed that Philip should be confirmed at twelve years old. Fifteen was thought to be quite early enough for him, and so it came about that we were confirmed together.

I am very thankful that, as it happened, I had Aunt Isobel to talk to.

"You're relieved from one perplexity at any rate," said she, when I had been speaking of that family failing which was also mine. "You know your weak point. I remember a long talk I had, years ago, with Mrs. Rampant, whom I used to know very well when we were young. She said one of her great difficulties was not being able to find out her besetting sin. She said it always made her so miserable when clergymen preached on that subject, and said that every enlightened Christian must have discovered one master-passion amongst the others in his soul. She had tried so hard, and could only find a lot, none much bigger or much less than the others. Some vanity, some selfishness, some distrust and weariness, some peevishness, some indolence, and a lapful of omissions. Since she married," continued my aunt,

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slowly pulling her thick, black eyelashes, after a fashion she had, "I believe she has found the long-lost failing. It is impatience with Mr. Rampant, she thinks."

I could not help laughing.

"However, Isobel, we may be sure of this, people of soft, gentle temperaments have their own difficulties with their own souls which we escape. Perhaps in the absence of such marked vices as bring one to open shame one might be slower to undertake vigorous self-improvement. You and I have no difficulty in seeing the sin lying at *our* door."

"N—no," said I.

"Well, *have you?*" said Aunt Isobel, facing round. "Bless me," she added impetuously, "don't say you haven't if you have. Never let anyone else think for you, child!"

"If you'll only have patience and let me explain——"

"I'm patience its very self!" interrupted my aunt, "but I do hate a No that means Yes."

My patience began to evaporate.

"There are some things, Aunt Isobel, *you know*, which can't be exactly squeezed into No and Yes. But if you don't want to be bothered I won't say anything, or I'll say yes or no, whichever you like."

And I kicked the shovel. (My aunt had shoved the poker with *her* slipper.) She drew her foot back and spoke very gently:

"I beg your pardon, my dear. Please say what you were going to say, and in your own way."

There is no doubt that good-humor—like bad—is infectious. I drew near to Aunt Isobel, and fingered the sleeve of her dress caressingly.

"You know, dear Aunt Isobel, that I should never think of saying to the Rector what I want to say to you. And I don't

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mean that I don't agree to whatever he tells us about right and wrong, but still I think if one can be quite convinced in the depths of one's own head, too, it's a good thing, as well as knowing that he must be right."

"Certainly," said Aunt Isobel.

"To begin with, I don't want you to think me any better than I am. When we were very little, Philip and I used to spit at each other, and pull each other's hair out. I do not do nasty or unladylike things now when I am angry, but, Aunt Isobel, my 'besetting sin' is not conquered, it's only civilized."

"I quite agree with you," said Aunt Isobel; which rather annoyed me. I gulped this down, however, and went on:

"The sin of ill-temper, *if it is a sin*," I began. I paused, expecting an outburst, but Aunt Isobel sat quite composedly, and fingered her eyelashes.

"Of course the Rector would be horrified if I said such a thing at the confirmation-class," I continued, in a dissatisfied tone.

"Don't invent grievances, Isobel, for I see you have a real stumbling-block, when we can come to it. You are not at the confirmation-class, and I am not easily horrified."

"Well, there are two difficulties—I explain very stupidly," said I with some sadness.

"We'll take them one at a time," replied Aunt Isobel with an exasperating blandness, which fortunately stimulated me to plain speaking.

"Everybody says one ought to 'restrain' one's temper, but I'm not sure if I think one ought. Isn't it better to *have things out*? Look at Philip. He's going to be confirmed, and then he'll go back to school, and when he and another boy quarrel, they'll fight it out, and feel comfortable afterwards. Aunt Isobel, I

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can quite understand feeling friendly after you've had it out, even if you're the one who is beaten, if it has been a fair fight. Now *restraining* your temper means forcing yourself to be good outside, and feeling all the worse inside, and feeling it longer. There is that utterly stupid little schoolroom-maid, who is under my orders, that I may teach her. Aunt Isobel, you would not credit how often I tell her the same thing, and how politely she says 'Yes, Miss!' and how invariably she doesn't do it after all. I say, 'You *know* I told you only yesterday. What *is* the use of my trying to teach you?' and all kinds of mild things like that; but really I quite hate her for giving me so much trouble and taking so little herself, and I wish I might discharge her. Now if only it wasn't wrong to throw—what are those things hot-tempered gentlemen always throw at their servants?"

"Don't ask me, my dear; ask Mr. Rampant."

"Oh, he throws everything. Bootjacks—that's it. Now if only I might throw a bootjack at her, it would waken her up, and be such a relief to my feelings that I shouldn't feel half so unforgiving towards her all along. Then as to swearing, Aunt Isobel——"

"Swearing!" ejaculated my aunt.

"Of course swearing is very wrong, and all profane-speaking; but I do think it *would* be a help if there was some innocent kind of strong language to use when one feels strongly."

"If we didn't use up all our innocent strong language by calling things awful and horrible that have not an element of awe or horror in them, we should have some left for our great occasions," said Aunt Isobel.

"Perhaps," said I, "but that's not exactly what I mean. Now do you think it would be wrong to invent expletives that mean nothing bad? As if Mr. Rampant were to say, 'Cockatoos and

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kingfishers! where are my shooting-boots?" For you know I do think it would make him more comfortable to put it in that way, especially if he had been kept waiting for them."

I paused, and Aunt Isobel turned round.

"Let us carry your idea well forward, Isobel. Bootjacks and expletives would no doubt be a relief to the thrower when hurled at servants or some one who could not (or from principle would not) retaliate, and the angry feelings that propelled them might be shortened by 'letting off the steam,' so to speak. But imagine yourself to have thrown a bootjack at Philip to relieve your feelings, and Philip (to relieve his) flinging it back at you. This would only give fresh impetus to *your* indignation, and whatever you threw next would not be likely to soothe *his*."

"Please don't!" said I. "Aunt Isobel, I could never throw a hatchet again."

"You are bold to promise to stop short anywhere when relieving passionate feelings by indulgence has begun on two sides. And, my dear, matters are no better where the indulgence is in words instead of blows. In the very mean and undignified position of abusing those who cannot return your abuse it might answer; but 'innocent strong language' would cease to be of any good when it was returned. If to 'Cockatoos and kingfishers! where are my shooting-boots?' an equally violent voice from below replied, 'Bats and blackbeetles! look for them yourself!' some stronger vent for the steam of hot temper would have to be found, and words of any kind would soon cease to relieve the feelings. Isobel, I have had long and hard experience, and your ideas are not new ones to me. Believe me, child, the only real relief is in absolute conquest, and the earlier the battle begins, the easier and the shorter it will be. If one can keep irritability under, one may escape a struggle to the death with passion. I

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am not cramming principles down your throat—I say as a matter of personal practice, that I do not know, and never hope to find a smother or a shorter way. But I can say also—after Victory comes Peace.”

I gave a heavy sigh.

“Thank you, Aunt Isobel, I will try; but it makes my second difficulty all the worse. I can fancy that I might learn self-control; I can fancy by main force holding my tongue, or compelling it to speak very slowly and civilly: but one can’t force one’s feelings. Aunt Isobel, if I had been very much insulted or provoked, I might keep on being civil for years on the outside, but how I should hate! You can’t prevent yourself hating. People talk about ‘forgive and forget.’ If forgiving means doing no harm, and forgetting means behaving quite civilly, as if nothing had happened, one could. But of course it’s nonsense to talk of making yourself really *forget* anything. And I think it’s just as absurd to talk of making yourself forgive, if forgiveness means feeling really kindly and comfortable as you did before. The very case in which I am most sure you are right about self-control is one of the worst the other way. I ought to be ashamed to speak of it—but I mean the hatchet-quarrel. If I had been very good instead of very wicked, and had restrained myself when Philip pulled all my work to pieces, and jeered at me for being miserable, I *couldn’t* have loved him again as I did before. Forgive and forget! One would often be very glad to. I have often awoke in the morning and known that I had forgotten something disagreeable, and when it did come back I was sorry; but one’s memory isn’t made of slate, or one’s heart either, that one can take a wet sponge and make it clean. Oh, dear! I wonder why ill-tempered people are allowed to live! They ought to be smothered in their cradles.”

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Aunt Isobel was about to reply, but I interrupted her.

"Don't think me humble-minded, Aunt Isobel, for I'm not. Sometimes I feel inclined to think that ill-tempered people have more sense of justice and of the strict rights and wrongs of things—at least if they are not very bad," I interpolated, thinking of Mr. Rampant—"than people who can smile and look pleasant at everything and everybody like Lucy Lambent, who goes on calling me darling when I know I'm scowling like a horned-owl. Nurse says she's the 'sweetest-tempered young lady she ever did know!' Aunt Isobel, what a muddle life is!"

"After some years of it," said my aunt, pulling her lashes hard, "I generally say, What a muddle my head is! Life is too much for it."

"I am quite willing to put it that way," sighed I, laying my muddle-head on the table, for I was tired. "It comes to much the same thing. Now—there is my great difficulty! I give in about the other one, but you can't cure this, and the truth is, I am not fit to go to a confirmation-class, much less to the Holy Communion."

"Isobel," said my aunt, folding her hands on her lap, and bending her very thick brows on the fire, "I want you to clearly understand that I speak with great hesitation, and without any authority. I can do nothing for you but tell you what I have found myself in *my* struggles."

"Thank you a thousand times," said I, "that's what I want. You know I hear two sermons every Sunday, and I have a lot of good books. Mrs. Welment sends me a little book about ill-temper every Christmas. The last one was about saying a little hymn before you let yourself speak whenever you feel angry. Philip got hold of it, and made fun of it. He said it was like the recipe for catching a sparrow by putting salt on its tail, because

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if you were cool enough to say a hymn, there would then be no need for saying it. What do you think, Aunt Isobel?"

"My dear, I have long ago given up the idea that everybody's weak points can all be strengthened by one plaster. The hymn might be very useful in some cases, though I confess that it would not be in mine. But prayer is; and I find a form of prayer necessary. At the same time I have such an irritable taste, that there are very few forms of devotion that gave me much help but the Prayer-Book collects and Jeremy Taylor. I do not know if you may find it useful to hear that in this struggle I sometimes find prayers more useful, if they are not too much to the sore point. A prayer about ill-temper might tend to make me cross, when the effort to join my spirit with the temptation-tried souls of all ages in a solemn prayer for the Church Universal would lift me out of the petty sphere of personal vexations, better than going into my grievances even piously. I speak merely of myself, mind."

"Thank you," I said. "But about what I said about hating. Aunt Isobel, did you ever change your feelings by force? Do you suppose anybody ever did?"

"I believe it is a great mistake to trouble oneself with the spiritual experiences of other people when one cannot fully know their circumstances, so I won't suppose at all. As to what I am sure of, Isobel, you know I speak the truth."

"Yes," said I; it would have been impertinence to say more.

"I have found that if one fights for good behavior, God makes one a present of the good feelings. I believe you will find it so. Even when you were a child, if you had tried to be good, and had managed to control yourself, and had not thrown the hatchet, I am quite sure you would not have hated Philip for long. Perhaps you would have thought how much better Philip used to

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behave before your father and mother died, and a little elder-sisterly, motherly feeling would have mixed with your wrath at seeing him with his fat legs planted apart, and his shoulders up, the very picture of willful naughtiness. Perhaps you might have thought you had repulsed him a little harshly when he wanted to help, as you were his chief playmate and twin sister."

"Please don't," said I. "How I wish I had! Indeed I don't know how I can ever speak of hating one of the others when there are so few of us, and we are orphans. But everybody isn't one's brother. And—oh, Aunt Isobel, at the time one does get so wild, and hard, and twisted in one's heart!"

"I don't think it is possible to overrate the hardness of the first close struggle with any natural passion," said my aunt, earnestly; "but indeed the easiness of after-steps is often quite beyond one's expectations. This free gift of grace with which God perfects our efforts may come in many ways, but I am convinced that it is the common experience of Christians that it does come."

"To everyone, do you think?" said I. "I've no doubt it comes to you, Aunt Isobel, but then you are so good."

"For pity's sake don't say I am good," said my aunt, and she kicked down all the fire-irons; and then begged my pardon, and picked them up again.

We were silent for a while. Aunt Isobel sat upright with her hands folded in her lap, and that look which her large eyes wear when she is trying to see all the sides of a question. They were dilated with a sorrowful earnestness when she spoke again.

"There *may* be some souls," she said, "whose brave and bitter lot it is to conquer comfortless. Perhaps some terrible inheritance of strong sin from the father is visited upon the son, and, only able to keep his purpose pure, he falls as fast as he struggles up, and still struggling falls again. Soft moments of peace with

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God and man may never come to him. He may feel himself viler than a thousand trumpery souls who could not have borne his trials for a day. Child, for you and for me is reserved no such cross and no such crown as theirs who falling still fight, and fighting fall, with their faces Zionwards, into the arms of the Everlasting Father. 'As one whom his mother comforteth shall be the healing of *their* wounds.' "

There was a brisk knock at the door, and Philip burst in.

"Look here, Isobel, if you mean to be late for confirmation-class I'm not going to wait for you. I hate sneaking in with the benches all full, and old Bartram blinking and keeping your place in the catechism for you with his fat forefinger."

"I am *very* sorry, Philip dear," said I; "please go without me, and I'll come on as quickly as I can. Thank you very much for coming to remind me."

"There's no such awful hurry," said Philip in a mollified tone; "I'll wait for you downstairs."

Which he did, whistling.

Aunt Isobel and I are not demonstrative, it does not suit us. She took hold of my arms, and I laid my head on her shoulder.

"Aunt Isobel, God help me, I will fight on to the very end."

"He *will* help you," said Aunt Isobel.

I could not look at her face and doubt it. Oh, my weak soul, never doubt it more!

CHAPTER V

CELESTIAL FIRE—I CHOOSE A TEXT

WE were confirmed.

As Aunt Isobel had said, I was spared perplexity by the unmistakable nature of my weakest point. There was no doubt as

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to what I should pray against and strive against. But on that day it seemed not only as if I could never give way to ill-temper again, but as if the trumpery causes of former outbreaks could never even tempt me to do so. As the lines of that ancient hymn to the Holy Ghost—*'Veni Creator'*—rolled on, I prayed humbly enough that my unworthy efforts might yet be crowned by the sevenfold gifts of the Spirit; but that a soul which sincerely longed to be "lightened with celestial fire" could be tempted to a common fit of sulks or scolding by the rub of nursery misdeeds and mischances, felt then so little likely as hardly to be worth deprecating on my knees.

And yet, when the service was over, the fatigue of the mental strain and of long kneeling and standing began to tell in a feeling that came sadly near to peevishness. I spent the rest of the day resolutely in my room and on my knees, hoping to keep up those high thoughts and emotions which had made me feel happy as well as good. And yet I all but utterly broke down into the most commonplace crossness because Philip did not do as I did, but romped noisily with the others, and teased me for looking grave at tea.

I just did not break down. So much remained alive of the "celestial fire," that I kept my temper behind my teeth. Long afterwards, when I learnt by accident that Philip's "good resolve" on the occasion had been that he would be kinder to "the little ones," I was very glad that I had not indulged my uncharitable impulse to lecture him on indifference to spiritual progress.

That evening Aunt Isobel gave me a new picture for my room. It was a fine print of the Crucifixion, for which I had often longed, a German woodcut in the powerful manner of Albert Dürer, after a design by Michael Angelo. It was neither too realistic nor too mediæval, and the face was very noble. Aunt

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Isobel had had it framed, and below on an illuminated scroll was written—"What are these wounds in Thine Hands? Those with which I was wounded in the house of My friends."

"I often think," she said, when we had hung it up and were looking at it, "that it is not in our Lord's Cross and Passion that His patience comes most home to us. To be patient before an unjust judge or brutal soldiers might be almost a part of self-respect; but patience with the daily disappointments of a life 'too good for this world,' as people say, patience with the follies, the unworthiness, the ingratitude of those one loves—these things are our daily example. For wounds in the house of our enemies pride may be prepared; wounds in the house of our friends take human nature by surprise, and God only can teach us to bear them. And with all reverence I think that we may say that ours have an element of difficulty in which His were wanting. They are mixed with blame on our own parts."

"That is why you have put that text for me?" said I. My aunt nodded.

I was learning to illuminate, and I took much pride in my room. I determined to make a text for myself, and to choose a very plain passage about ill-temper. Mrs. Welment's books supplied me with plenty. I chose "Let not the sun go down upon your wrath," but I resolved to have the complete text as it stands in the Bible. It seemed fair to allow myself to remember that anger is not always a sin, and I thought it useful to remind myself that if by obstinate ill-temper I got the victory in a quarrel, it was only because the devil had got the victory over me. So the text ran full length:—"Be ye angry, and sin not; let not the sun go down upon your wrath: Neither give place to the devil." It made a very long scroll, and I put it up over my window, and fastened it with drawing-pins.

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CHAPTER VI

THEATRICAL PROPERTIES—I PREPARE A PLAY—PHILIP BEGINS TO
PREPARE THE SCENERY—A NEW FRIEND

PHILIP was at school during the remainder of the year, but I tried to put my good resolves in practice with the children, and it made us a more peaceful household than usual. When Philip came home for the Christmas holidays we were certainly in very pleasant moods—for an ill-tempered family.

Our friends allow that some quickness of wits accompanies the quickness of our tempers. From the days when we were very young our private theatricals have been famous in our own little neighborhood. I was paramount in nursery mummeries, and in the children's charade parties of the district, for Philip was not very reliable when steady help was needed; but at school he became stage-manager of the theatricals there.

I do not know that he learned to act very much better than I, and I think Alice (who was only twelve) had twice the gift of either of us, but every half he came back more ingenious than before in matters for which we had neither the talent nor the tools. He glued together yards of canvas or calico, and produced scenes and drop-curtains which were ambitious and effective, though I thought him a little reckless both about good drawing and good clothes. His glue-kettles and size-pots were always steaming, his paint was on many and more inappropriate objects than the canvas. A shilling's worth of gilding powder went such a long way that we had not only golden crowns and golden scepters, and golden chains for our dungeon, and golden wings for our fairies, but the nursery furniture became irregularly and unintentionally gilded, as well as nurse's stuff dress, when she sat on

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a warrior's shield, which was drying in the rocking-chair.

But these were small matters. Philip gave us a wonderful account of the "properties" he had made for school theatricals. A dragon painted to the life, and with matches so fixed into the tip of him that the boy who acted as the life and soul of this ungainly carcass could wag a fiery tail before the amazed audience, by striking it on that particular scale of his dragon's skin which was made of sand-paper. Rabbit-skin masks, cotton-wool wigs, and wigs of tow, seven-league boots, and witches' hats, thunder with a tea-tray, and all the phases of the moon with a moderated lamp—with all these things Philip enriched the school theater, though for some time he would not take so much trouble for our own.

But during this last half he had written me three letters—and three very kind ones. In the latest he said that—partly because he had been making some things for us, and partly because of changes in the school theatrical affairs—he should bring home with him a box of very valuable "properties" for our use at Christmas. He charged me at once to prepare a piece which should include a prince disguised as a woolly beast on two legs with large fore-paws (easily shaken off), a fairy godmother with a tow wig and the highest hat I could ever hope to see, a princess turned into a willow-tree (painted from memory of the old one at home, and with fine gnarls and knots, through which the princess could see everything, and prompt if needful), a disconsolate parent, and a faithful attendant, to be acted by one person, with as many belated travelers as the same actor could personate into the bargain. These would all be eaten up by the dragon at the right wing, and re-enter more belated than ever at the left, without stopping longer than was required to roll a peal of thunder at the back. The fifth and last character was to be the dragon him-

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self. The forest scene would be wanted, and I was to try and get an old cask for a cave.

I must explain that I was not expected to write a play. We never took the trouble to "learn parts." We generally took some story which pleased us out of "Grimm's Fairy Tales" or the "Arabian Nights," and arranged for the various scenes. We each had a copy of the arrangement, and our proper characters were assigned to us. After this we did the dialogue as if it had been a charade. We were well accustomed to act together, and could trust each other and ourselves. Only Alice's brilliancy ever took us by surprise.

By the time that Philip came home I had got in the rough outline of the plot. He arrived with a box of properties, the mere size of which raised a cheer of welcome from the little ones, and red-hot for our theatricals.

Philip was a little apt to be red-hot over projects, and to cool before they were accomplished; but on this occasion we had no forebodings of such evil. Besides, he was to play the dragon! When he did fairly devote himself to anything, he grudged no trouble and hesitated at no undertakings. He was so much pleased with my plot and with the cave, that he announced that he should paint a new forest scene for the occasion. I tried to dissuade him. There were so many other things to be done, and the old scene was very good. But he had learnt several new tricks of the scene-painter's trade, and was bent upon putting them into practice. So he began his new scene, and I resolved to work all the harder at the odds and ends of our preparations. To be driven into a corner and pressed for time always stimulated instead of confusing me. I think the excitement of it is pleasant. Alice had the same dogged way of working at a crisis, and we felt quite confident of being able to finish up "at a push," what-

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ever Philip might leave undone. The theatricals were to be on Twelfth Night.

Christmas passed very happily on the whole. I found my temper much oftener tried since Philip's return, but this was not only because he was very willful and very fond of teasing, but because with the younger ones I was always deferred to.

One morning we were very busy in the nursery, which was our workshop. Philip's glue-pots and size-pots were steaming, there were colored powders on every chair, Alice and I were laying a coat of invisible green over the cave-cask, and Philip, in radiant good-humor, was giving distance to his woodland glades in the most artful manner with powder-blue, and calling on us for approbation—when the house-maid came in.

"It's *not* lunch-time?" cried Alice. "It can't be!"

"Get away, Mary," said Philip, "and tell cook if she puts on any more meals I'll paint her best cap pea-green. She's sending up luncheons and dinners all day long now: just because she knows we're busy."

Mary only laughed, and said, "It's a gentleman wants to see you, Master Philip," and she gave him a card. Philip read it, and we waited with some curiosity.

"It's a man I met in the train," said he, "a capital fellow. He lives in the town. His father's a doctor there. Granny must invite him to the theatricals. Ask him to come here, Mary, and show him the way."

"Oughtn't you to go and fetch him yourself?" said I.

"I can't leave this," said Philip. "He'll be all right. He's as friendly as possible."

I must say here that "Granny" was our maternal grandmother, with whom we lived. My mother and father were cousins, and Granny's husband was of that impetuous race to

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which we belonged. If he had been alive he would have kept us all in good order, no doubt. But he was dead, and Granny was the gentlest of old ladies: I fear she led a terrible life with us all!

Philip's friend came upstairs. He *was* very friendly, in fact Alice and I thought him forward, but he was several years older than Philip, who seemed proud of the acquaintance. Perhaps Alice and I were biased by the fact that he spoilt our pleasant morning. He was one of those people who look at anything one has been working at with such unintelligent eyes that their indifference ought not to dishearten one; and yet it does.

"It's for our private theatricals," said Philip, as Mr. Clinton's amazed stare passed from our paint-covered selves to the new scene.

"My cousins in Dublin have private theatricals," said Mr. Clinton. "My uncle has built on a room for the theater. All the fittings and scenes came from London, and the first costumers in Dublin send in all the dresses, and everything that is required, on the afternoon before the performance."

"Oh, we're in a much smaller way," said Philip; "but I've some properties here that don't look bad by candlelight." But Mr. Clinton had come up to the cask, and was staring at it and us. I knew by the way Alice got quietly up, and shook some chips with a decided air out of her apron, that she did not like being stared at. But her movement only drew Mr. Clinton's especial attention.

"You'll catch it from your grandmamma for making such a mess of your clothes, won't you?" he asked.

"I *beg* your pardon?" said Alice, with so perfect an air of not having heard him that he was about to repeat the question, when she left the nursery with the exact exit which she had made

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as a Discreet Princess repelling unwelcome advances in last year's play.

I was afraid of an outburst from Philip, and said in hasty civility, "This is a cave we are making."

"They'd a splendid cave at Covent Garden last Christmas," said Mr. Clinton. "It covered half the stage. An enormously tall man dressed in cloth of silver stood in the entrance, and waved a spear ten or twelve feet long over his head. A fairy was let down above that, so you may be sure the cave was pretty big."

"Oh, here's the dragon," said Philip, who had been rummaging in the property box. "He's got a fiery tail."

"They were quite the go in pantomimes a few years ago," said Mr. Clinton, yawning. "My uncle had two or three—bigger than that, of course."

Philip saw that his friend was not interested in amateur property-making, and changed the subject.

"What have you been doing this morning?" said he.

"I drove here with my father, who had got to pass your gates. I say, there's splendid shooting on the marsh now. I want you to come out with me, and we'll pot a wild duck or two."

"I've no gun," said Philip, and to soften the statement added, "there's no one here to go out with."

"I'll go out with you. And I say, we could just catch the train back to the town, and if you'll come and lunch with us, we'll go out a bit this afternoon and look round. But you must get a gun."

"I should like some fresh air," said Philip, "and as you've come over for me——"

I knew the appealing tone in his voice was for my ears, for my face had fallen.

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"Could I be going on with it?" I asked, nodding towards the forest scene.

"Oh, dear, no! I'll go at it again to-night. It ought all to be painted by candlelight by rights. I'm not going to desert my post," he added.

"I hope not," said I as good-humoredly as I could; but dismay was in my heart.

CHAPTER VII

A QUARREL—BOBBY IS WILLING—EXIT PHILIP

PHILIP came back by an evening train, and when he had had something to eat he came up to the nursery to go on with the scene. We had got everything ready for him, and he worked for about half an hour. But he was so sleepy, with cold air and exercise, that he did not paint well, and then he got impatient, and threw it up—"till the morning."

In the morning he set to work, talking all the time about wild duck and teal, and the price of guns; but by the time he had put last night's blunders straight, the front doorbell rang, and Mary announced "Mr. Clinton."

Philip was closeted in his room with his new friend till twelve o'clock. Then they went out into the yard, and finally Mr. Clinton stayed to luncheon. But I held my peace, and made Alice hold hers. Mr. Clinton went away in the afternoon, but Philip got the plate-powder and wash-leather, and occupied himself in polishing the silver fittings of his dressing-case.

"I think you might do that another time, Philip," said I, "you've not been half an hour at the properties to-day, and you could clean your bottles and things quite as well after the theatricals."

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"As it happens I just couldn't," said Philip; "I've made a bargain, and bargains won't wait."

Alice and I screamed in one breath, "You're *not* going to give away the dressing-case!"—for it had been my father's.

"I said a *bargain*," replied Philip, rubbing harder than ever; "you can't get hold of a gun every day without paying down hard cash."

"I hate Mr. Clinton!" said Alice.

It was a very unfortunate speech, for it declared open war; and when this is done it cannot be undone. There is no taking back those sharp sayings which the family curse hangs on the tips of our tongues.

Philip and Alice exchanged them pretty freely. Philip called us selfish, inhospitable and jealous. He said we grudged his enjoying himself in the holidays, when he had been working like a slave for us during the half. That we disliked his friend because he *was* his friend, and (not to omit the taunt of sex) that Clinton was too manly a fellow to please girls, etc., etc. In self-defence Alice was much more outspoken about both Philip and Mr. Clinton than she had probably intended to be. That Philip began things hotly, and that his zeal cooled before they were accomplished—that his imperiousness laid him open to flattery, and the necessity of playing first-fiddle betrayed him into second-rate friendships, which were thrown after the discarded hobbies—that Mr. Clinton was ill-bred, and with that vulgarity of mind which would make him rather proud than ashamed of getting the best of a bargain with his friend—these things were not the less taunts because they were true.

If the violent scenes which occur in ill-tempered families *felt* half as undignified and miserable as they *look*, surely they would be less common! I believe Philip and Alice would have come to

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blows if I had not joined with him to expel her from the room. I was not happy about it, for my sympathy was on her side of the quarrel, but she had been the one to declare war, and I could not control Philip. In short it is often not easy to keep the peace and be just, too, as I should like to have said to Aunt Isobel, if she had been at home. But she was to be away until the 6th.

Alice defeated, I took Philip seriously to task. Not about his friend—the subject was too sore, and Alice had told him all that we thought, and rather more than we thought on that score—but about the theatricals. I said if he really was tired of the business we would throw it up, and let our friends know that the proposed entertainment had fallen through, but that if he wanted it to go forward he must decide what help he would give, and then abide by his promise.

We came to terms. If I would let him have a day or two's fun with his gun, Philip promised to "spurt," as he called it, at the end. I told him we would be content if he would join in a "thorough rehearsal," the afternoon before, and devote himself to the business on the day of the performance.

"Real business, you know," I added, "with nobody but ourselves. Nobody coming in to interrupt."

"Of course," said Philip; "but I'll do more than that, Isobel. There's the scene——"

"*We'll* finish the scene," said I, "if you don't aggravate Alice so that I lose her help as well as yours."

Alice was very sulky, which I could hardly wonder at, and I worked alone, except for Bobby, the only one with anything like a good temper among us, who roasted himself very patiently with my size-pot, and hammered bits of ivy, and of his fingers, rather neatly over the cave. But Alice was impulsive and kind-

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hearted. When I got a bad headache, from working too long, she came round, and helped me. Philip was always going to do so, but as a matter of fact he went out every day with the old fowling-piece for which he had given his dressing-case.

When the ice bore Charles also deserted us, but Alice and I worked steadily on at dresses and scenery. And Bobby worked with us.

The fifth of January arrived, the day before the theatricals. Philip spent the morning in cleaning his gun, and after luncheon he brought it into the nursery to "finish" with a peculiarly aggravating air.

"When shall you be ready to rehearse?" I asked.

"Oh, presently," said Philip, "there's plenty of time yet. It's a great nuisance," he added. "I'll never have anything to do with theatricals again. They make a perfect slave of one."

"*You've* not slaved much, at any rate," said Charles.

"You'd better not give me any of your cheek," said Philip threateningly.

"We've done without him for a week, I don't know why we shouldn't do without him to-morrow," muttered Alice from the corner where she was sewing gold paper stars on to the Enchanted Prince's tunic.

"I wish you could," growled Philip, who took the suggestion more quietly than I expected; "anybody could do the Dragon, there's no acting in it!"

"I won't," said Charles, "Isobel gave me the Enchanted Prince or the Woolly Beast, and I shall stick to my part."

"Could I do the Dragon?" asked Bobby, releasing his hot face from the folds of an old blue cloak lined with red, in which he was rehearsing his walk as a belated wayfarer.

"Certainly not," said I, "you're the Bereaved Father and the

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Faithful Attendant to begin with, and I hope you won't muddle them. And you're Twelve Travelers as well, and the thunder, remember!"

"I don't care how many I do, if only I can," said Bobby, drawing his willing arm across his steaming forehead. "I should like to have a fiery tail."

"You can't devour yourself once—let alone twelve times," said I sternly. "Don't be silly, Bob."

It was not Bob I was impatient with in reality, it was Philip.

"If you really mean to desert the theatricals after all you promised, I would much rather try to do without you," said I indignantly.

"Then you may!" retorted Philip. "I wash my hands of it and of the whole lot of you, and of every nursery entertainment henceforward!" and he got the fragments of his gun together with much clatter. But Charles had posted himself by the door to say his say, and to be ready to escape when he had said it.

"You're ashamed of it, that's it," said he, "you want to sit among the grown-ups with a spy-glass, now you've got Apothecary Clinton's son for a friend,"—and after this brief and insulting summary of the facts, Charles vanished. But Philip, white with anger, was too quick for him, and at the top of the backstairs he dealt him such a heavy blow that Charles fell headlong down the first flight.

Alice and I flew to the rescue. I lived in dread of Philip really injuring Charles some day, for his blows were becoming serious ones as he grew taller and stronger, and his self-control did not seem to wax in proportion. And Charles's temper was becoming very aggressive. On this occasion, as soon as he had regained breath, and we found that no bones were broken, it was only by main force that we held him back from pursuing Philip.

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"I'll hit him—I'll stick to him," he sobbed in his fury, shaking his head like a terrier, and doubling his fists. But he was rather sick with the fall, and we made him lie down to recover himself, whilst Alice, Bobby and I laid our heads together to plan a substitute for Philip in the Dragon.

When bed-time came, and Philip was still absent, we became uneasy, and as I lay sleepless that night I asked myself if I had been to blame for the sulks in which he had gone off. In fits of passion Philip had often threatened to go away and never let us hear of him again. I knew that such things did happen, and it made me unhappy when he went off like this, although his threats had hitherto been no more than a common and rather unfair device of ill-temper.

CHAPTER VIII

I HEAR FROM PHILIP—A NEW PART WANTED—I LOSE MY TEMPER
—WE ALL LOSE OUR TEMPER

NEXT morning's post brought the following letter from Philip:—

"MY DEAR ISOBEL:

"You need not bother about the Dragon—I'll do it. But I wish you would put another character into the piece. It is for Clinton. He says he will act with us. He says he can do anything if it is a leading part. He has got black velvet knickerbockers and scarlet stockings, and he can have the tunic and cloak I wore last year, and the flap hat; and you must lend him your white ostrich feather. Make him some kind of a grandee. If you can't, he must be the Prince, and Charles can do some of the Travelers. We are going out on the marsh this morning, but I shall be with you after luncheon, and Clinton in the evening. He does not want any rehearsing, only a copy of the plan. Let Alice make it, her writing is the clearest, and I wish she would make me a new one, I've torn mine, and it is so dirty, I shall never be able to read it inside the Dragon. Don't forget.

"Your affectionate brother,

"PHILIP."

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There are limits to one's patience, and with some of us they are not very wide. Philip had passed the bounds of mine, and my natural indignation was heightened by a sort of revulsion from last night's anxiety on his account. His lordly indifference to other people's feelings was more irritating than the trouble he gave us by changing his mind.

"You won't let him take the Woolly Beast from me, Isobel?" cried Charles. "And you know you promised to lend *me* your ostrich plume."

"Certainly not," said I. "And you shall have the feather. I promised."

"If Mr. Clinton acts—I sha'n't," said Alice.

"Mr. Clinton won't act," said I, "I can't alter the piece now. But I wish, Alice, you were not always so very ready to drive things into a quarrel."

"If we hadn't given way to Philip so much he wouldn't think we can bear anything," said Alice.

I could not but feel that there was some truth in this, and that it was a dilemma not provided against in Aunt Isobel's teaching, that one may be so obliging to those one lives with as to encourage, if not to teach them to be selfish.

Perhaps it would have been well if on the first day when Philip deserted us Alice and I had spent the afternoon with Lucy Lambent, and if we had continued to amuse ourselves with our friends when Philip amused himself with his. We should then have been forced into a common decision as to whether the play should be given up, and without reproaches or counter-reproaches, Philip would have learned that he could not leave all the work to us, and then arrange and disarrange the plot at his own pleasure, or rather, he would never have thought that he could. But a plan of this kind requires to be carried out with

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perfect coolness to be either justifiable or effective. And we have not a cool head amongst us.

One thing was clear. I ought to keep faith with the others who had worked when Philip would not. Charles should not be turned out of his part. I rather hustled over the question of a new part for Mr. Clinton in my mind. I disliked him, and did not want to introduce him. I said to myself that it was quite unreasonable—out of the question in fact—and I prepared to say so to Philip.

Of course he was furious—that I knew he would be; but I was firm.

“Charles can be the old Father, and the Family Servant, too,” said he. “They’re both good parts.”

“Then give them to Mr. Clinton,” said I, well knowing that he would not. “Charles has taken a great deal of pains with his part, and these are his holidays as well as yours, and the Prince shall not be taken from him.”

“Well, I say it shall. And Charles may be uncommonly glad if I let him act at all after the way he behaved yesterday.”

“The way *you* behaved, you mean,” said I—for my temper was slipping from my grasp;—“you might have broken his neck.”

“All the more danger in his provoking me, and in your encouraging him.”

I began to feel giddy, which is always a bad sign with us. It rang in my mind’s ear that this was what came of being forbearing with a bully like Philip. But I still tried to speak quietly.

“If you think,” said I through my teeth, “that I am going to let you knock the others about, and rough-ride it over our theatricals, you are mistaken.”

“*Your* theatricals!” cried Philip, mimicking me. “I like that! Whom do the properties belong to, pray?”

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"If it goes by buying," was my reply to this rather difficult question, "most of them belong to Granny, for the canvas and the paints and the stuff for the dresses, have gone down in the bills; and if it goes by work, I think we have done quite as much as you. And if some of the properties *are* yours, the play is mine. And as to the scene—you did the distance in the middle of the wood, but Alice and I painted all the foreground."

"Then you may keep your foreground, and I'll take my distance," roared Philip, and in a moment his pocket-knife was open, and he had cut a hole a foot-and-a-half square in the center of the Enchanted Forest, and Bobby's amazed face (he was running a tuck in his cloak behind the scenes) appeared through the aperture.

If a kind word would have saved the fruits of our week's hard labor, not one of us would have spoken it. We sacrifice anything we possess in our ill-tempered family—except our wills.

"And you may take your play and I'll take my properties," continued Philip, gathering up hats, wigs, and what not from the costumes which Alice and I had arranged in neat groups ready for the green-room. "I'll give everything to Clinton this evening for his new theater, and we'll see how you get on without the Fiery Dragon."

"Clinton *can't* want a fiery dragon when he's got you," said Charles, in a voice of mock compliment.

The Fairy Godmother's crabstick was in Philip's hand. He raised it, and flew at Charles, but I threw myself between them and caught Philip's arm.

"You shall not hit him," I cried.

Aunt Isobel is right about one thing. If one *does* mean to stop short in a quarrel one must begin at a very early stage. It is easier to smother one's feelings than to check one's words. By

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the time it comes to blows it is like trying to pull up a runaway horse. The first pinch Philip gave to my arm set my brain on fire. When he threw me heavily against the cave with a mocking laugh, and sprang after Charles, I could not have yielded an inch to him to save my life—not to earn Fortunatus' purse, or three fairy wishes—not to save whatever I most valued.

What would have induced me? I do not know, but I know that I am very glad it is not quite so easy to sell one's soul at one bargain as fairy-tales make out!

My struggle with Philip had given Charles time to escape. Philip could not find him, and rough as were the words with which he returned to me, I fancy they cost him some effort of self-control, and they betrayed to Alice's instinct and mine that he would have been glad to get out of the extremity to which our tempers had driven matters.

"Look here!" said he in a tone which would have been perfect if we had been acting a costermonger and his wife. "Are you going to make Clinton the Prince or not?"

"I am not," said I, nursing my elbow, which was cut by a nail on the cask. "I am not going to do anything whatever for Mr. Clinton, and I ought to be cured of working for you."

"You have lost an opening to make peace," said an inner voice. "You've given the yielding plan a fair trial, and it has failed," said self-justification—the swiftest pleader I know. "There are some people, with self-satisfied, arbitrary tempers, upon whom gentleness is worse than wasted, because it misleads them. They have that remnant of savage notions which drives them to mistake generosity for weakness. The only way to convince them is to hit them harder than they hit you. And it is the kindest plan for everybody concerned."

I am bound to say—though it rather confuses some of my

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ideas—that experience has convinced me that this last statement is not without truth. But I am also bound to say that it was not really applicable to Philip. He is not as generous as Alice, but I had no good reason to believe that kindly concession would be wasted on him.

When I had flung my last defiance, Philip replied in violent words of a kind which girls in our class of life do not (happily!) use, even in a rage. They were partly drowned by the clatter with which he dragged his big box across the floor, and filled it with properties of all kinds, from the Dragon to the foot-light reflectors.

“I am going by the 4.15 to the town,” said he, as he pulled the box out towards his own room. “You need not wait for either Clinton or me. Pray ‘ring up’ punctually!”

At this moment—having fully realized the downfall of the theatricals—Bobby burst into a howl of weeping. Alice scolded him for crying, and Charles reproached her for scolding him, on the score that her antipathy to Mr. Clinton had driven Philip to this extreme point of insult and ill-temper.

Charles’s own conduct had been so far from soothing, that Alice had abundant material for retorts, and she was not likely to be a loser in the war of words. What she did say I did not hear, for by that time I had locked myself up in my own room.

CHAPTER IX

SELF-REPROACH—FAMILY DISCOMFORT—OUT ON THE MARSH—
VICTORY

IF I could have locked myself up anywhere else I should have preferred it. I would have justified my own part in the present

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family quarrel to Aunt Isobel herself, and yet I would rather not have been alone just now with the text I had made and pinned up, and with my new picture. However, there was nowhere else to go.

A restless way I have of pacing up and down when I am in a rage, has often reminded me of the habits of the more ferocious of the wild beasts in the Zoölogical Gardens, and has not lessened my convictions on the subject of the family temper. For a few prowls up and down my den I managed to occupy my thoughts with fuming against Philip's behavior, but as the first flush of anger began to cool, there was no keeping out of my head the painful reflections which the sight of my text, my picture, and my books suggested—the miserable contrast between my good resolves and the result.

"It only shows," I muttered to myself, in a voice about as amiable as the growlings of a panther, "it only shows that it is quite hopeless. We're an ill-tempered family—a hopelessly ill-tempered family; and to try to cure us is like patching the lungs of a consumptive family. I don't even wish that I *could* forgive Philip. He doesn't deserve it."

And then as I nursed the cut on my elbow, and recalled the long hours of work at the properties, the damaged scene, the rifling of the green-room, and Philip's desertion with the Dragon, his probable industry for Mr. Clinton's theatricals, and the way he had left us to face our own disappointed audience, fierce indignation got the upper hand once more.

"I don't care," I growled afresh; "if I have lost my temper, I believe I was right to lose it—at least, that no one could have been expected not to lose it. I will never beg his pardon for it, let Aunt Isobel say what she will. I should hate him ever after if I did, for the injustice of the thing. Pardon indeed!"

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I turned at the top of the room and paced back towards the window, towards the long, illuminated text, and that

“——noble face,
So sweet and full of grace,”

which bent unchangeable from the emblem of suffering and self-sacrifice.

I have a trick of talking to myself, and to inanimate objects. I addressed myself now to the text and the picture.

“But if I don’t,” I continued, “if after being confirmed with Philip in the autumn, we come to just one of our old catastrophes in the very next holidays, as bad as ever, and spiting each other to the last—I shall take you all down to-morrow! I don’t pretend to be able to persuade myself that black is white—like Mrs. Rampant; but I am not a hypocrite, I won’t ornament my room with texts, and crosses, and pictures, and symbols of Eternal Patience, when I do not even mean to *try* to sacrifice myself, or to be patient.”

It is curious how one’s faith and practice hang together. I felt very doubtful whether it was even desirable that I should. Whether we did not misunderstand God’s will, in thinking that it is well that people in the right should ever sacrifice themselves for those who are in the wrong. I did not, however, hide from myself, that to say this was to unsay all my resolves about my besetting sin. I decided to take down my texts, pictures, and books, and grimly thought that I would frame a fine photograph Charles had given me of a lioness, and would make a new inscription, the motto of the old Highland Clan Chattan—with which our family is remotely connected—“*Touch not the cat but a glove.*”*

* *Anglicé* “without a glove.”

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"Put on your gloves next time, Master Philip!" I thought. "I shall make no more of these feeble attempts to keep in my claws, which only tempt you to irritate me beyond endurance. We're an ill-tempered family, and you're not the most amiable member of it. For my own part, I can control my temper when it is not running away with me, and be fairly kind to the little ones, so long as they do what I tell them. But at a crisis like this, I can no more yield to your unreasonable wishes, stifle my just anger, apologize for a little wrong to you who owe apologies for a big one, and pave the way to peace with my own broken will, than the leopard can change his spots."

"And yet—if *I could!*"

It broke from me almost like a cry, "if my besetting sin *is* a sin, if I have given way to it under provocation—if this moment is the very hardest of the battle, and the day is almost lost—and if now, even now, I could turn round and tread down this Satan under my feet. If this were to-morrow morning, and I had done it—O my soul, what triumph, what satisfaction in past prayers, what hope for the future! Then thou shouldest believe the old legends of sinners numbered with the saints, of tyrants taught to be gentle, of the unholy learning to be pure—for one believes with heartiness what he has experienced—then text and picture and cross should hang on, in spite of frailty, and in this sign shalt thou conquer."

One ought to be very thankful for the blessings of good health and strong nerves, but I sometimes wish I could cry more easily. I should not like to be like poor Mrs. Rampant, whose head or back is always aching, and whose nerves make me think of the strings of an Æolian harp, on which Mr. Rampant, like rude Boreas, is perpetually playing with the tones of his voice, the creak of his boots, and the bang of his doors. But her tears do

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relieve, if they exhaust her, and back-ache cannot be as bad as heart-ache—hot, dry heart-ache, or cold, hard heart-ache. I think if I could have cried I could have felt softer. As it was I began to wish that I could do what I felt sure that I could not.

If I dragged myself to Philip, and got out a few conciliatory words, I should break down in a worse fury than before if he sneered or rode the high horse, “as he probably would,” thought I.

On my little carved Prayer-book-shelf lay, with other volumes, a copy of A’Kempis, which had belonged to my mother. Honesty had already whispered that if I deliberately gave up the fight with evil this must be banished with my texts and pictures. At the present moment a familiar passage came into my head:

“When one that was in great anxiety of mind, often wavering between fear and hope, did once humbly prostrate himself in prayer, and said, ‘O if I knew that I should persevere!’ he presently heard within him an answer from God, which said, ‘If thou didst know it, what would’st thou do? Do what thou would’st do then, and thou shalt be safe.’”

Supposing I began to do right, and trusted the rest? I could try to speak to Philip, and it would be something even if I stopped short and ran away. Or if I could not drag my feet to him, I could take Aunt Isobel’s advice, and pray. I might not be able to speak civilly to Philip, or even to pray about him in my present state of mental confusion, but I could repeat *some* prayer reverently. Would it not be better to start on the right road, even if I fell by the way?

I crossed the room in three strides to the place where I usually say my prayers. I knelt, and folded my hands, and shut my eyes, and began to recite the Te Deum in my head, trying to attend to it. I did attend pretty well, but it was mere attention, till I felt slightly softened at the verse—“Make them to be num-

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bered with Thy saints in glory everlasting." For my young mother was very good, and I always think of her when the choir comes to that verse on Sundays.

"Vouchsafe, O Lord, to keep us this day without sin." "It's too late to ask that," thought I, with that half of my brain which was not attending to the words of the Te Deum, "and yet there is a little bit of the day left which will be dedicated either to good or evil."

I prayed the rest, "O Lord, have mercy upon us, have mercy upon us. O Lord, let Thy mercy lighten upon us, as our trust is in Thee. O Lord, in Thee have I trusted, let me never be confounded!" and with the last verse there came from my heart a very passion of desire for strength to do the will of God at the sacrifice of my own. I flung myself on the floor with inarticulate prayers, that were very fully to the point now, and they summed themselves up again in the old words, "In Thee, O Lord, have I trusted, let me never be confounded!"

When I raised my head I caught sight of the picture, and for an instant felt a superstitious thrill. The finely-drawn face shone with a crimson glow. But in a moment more I saw the cause, and exclaimed—"The sun is setting! I must speak to Philip before it goes down."

"What should I say? Somehow, now, my judgment felt very clear and decisive. I would not pretend that he had been in the right, but I would acknowledge where I had been in the wrong. I *had* been disobliging about Mr. Clinton, and I would say so, and offer to repair that matter. I would regret having lost my temper, and say nothing about his. I would not offer to deprive Charles of his part, or break my promise of the white feather; but I would make a new part for Mr. Clinton, and he should be quite welcome to any finery in my possession except Charles's plume.

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This concession was no difficulty to me. Bad as our tempers are, I am thankful to say they are not mean ones. If I dressed out Mr. Clinton at all, it would come natural to do it liberally. I would do all this—if *I could*. I might break down into a passion at the mere sight of Philip and the properties, but at least I would begin “as if I knew I should persevere.”

At this moment the front door was shut with a bang which shook the house.

It was Philip going to catch the 4.15. I bit my lips, and began to pull on my boots, watching the red sun as it sank over the waste of marshland which I could see from my window. I must try to overtake him, but I could run well, and I suspected that he would not walk fast. I did not believe that he was really pleased at the break-up of our plans and the prospect of a public exposure of our squabbles, though as a family we are always willing to make fools of ourselves rather than conciliate each other.

My things were soon on, and I hurried from my room. In the window-seat of the corridor was Alice. The sight of her reproached me. She slept in my room, but I jealously retained full power over it, and when I locked myself in she dared not disturb me.

“I’m afraid you’ve been wanting to come in,” said I. “Do go in now.”

“Thank you,” said Alice, “I’ve nowhere to go.” Then, tightening her lips, she added, “Philip’s gone.”

“I know,” said I. “I’m going to try and get him back.” Alice stared in amazement.

“You always do spoil Philip, because he’s your twin,” she said, at last; “you wouldn’t do it for me.”

“Oh, Alice, you don’t know. I’d much rather do it for you,

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girls are so much less aggravating than boys. But don't try and make it harder for me to make peace."

"I beg your pardon, Isobel. If you do, you're an angel. I couldn't, to save my life."

At the head of the stairs I met Charles.

"He's gone," said he significantly, and bestriding the balustrades, he shot to the foot. When I reached him he was pinching the biceps muscle of his arm.

"Feel, Isobel," said he. "It's hard, isn't it?"

"Very, Charles, but I'm in a hurry."

"Look here," he continued, with an ugly expression on his face, "I'm going into training. I'm going to eat bits of raw mutton, and dumb-bell. Wait a year, wait half a year, and I shall be able to thrash him. I'll make him remember these theatricals. I don't forget. I haven't forgot his bursting my football out of spite."

It is not pleasant to see one's own sins reflected on other faces. I could not speak.

By the front door was Bobby. He was by way of looking out of the portico window, but his swollen eyes could not possibly have seen anything.

"Oh, Isobel, Isobel!" he sobbed, "Philip's gone, and taken the D—d—d—dragon with him, and we're all m—m—m—miserable."

"Don't cry, Bobby," said I, kissing him. "Finish your cloak, and be doing anything you can. I'm going to try and bring Philip back."

"Oh, thank you, thank you, Isobel! If only he'll come back I don't care what I do. Or I'll give up my parts if he wants them, and be a scene-shifter, if you'll lend me your carpet-slippers, and make me a paper cap."

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"God has given you a very sweet temper, Bobby," said I, solemnly. "I wish I had one like it."

"You're as good as gold," said Bobby. His loving hug added strength to my resolutions, and I ran across the garden and jumped the ha-ha, and followed Philip over the marsh. I do not know whether he heard my steps when I came nearly up with him, but I fancy his pace slackened. Not that he looked round. He was much too sulky.

Philip is a very good-looking boy, much handsomer than I am, though we are alike. But the family curse disfigures his face when he is cross more than anyone's, and the back view of him is almost worse than the front. His shoulders get so humped up, and his whole figure is stiff with cross-grained obstinacy.

"I shall never hold out if he speaks as ungraciously as he looks," thought I in despair. "But I'll not give in till I can hold out no longer."

"Philip!" I said. He turned round, and his face was no prettier to look at than his shoulders.

"What do you want?" (in the costermonger tone).

"I want you to come back, Philip"—(here I choked).

"I daresay," he sneered, "and you want the properties! But you've got your play, and your amiable Charles, and your talented Alice, and your ubiquitous Bobby. And the audience will be entertained with an unexpected after-piece entitled—"The dis-obliging disobliged." "

Oh, it *was* hard! I think if I had looked at Philip's face I must have broken down, but I kept my eyes steadily on the crimson sun, which loomed large through the marsh mists that lay upon the horizon, as I answered with justifiable vehemence—

"I have a very bad temper, Philip" (I checked the disposition to add—"and so have you"), "but I never tell a lie. I have *not*

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come after the properties. The only reason for which I have come is to try and make peace." At this point I gathered up all my strength and hurried on, staring at the sun till the bushes near us and the level waste of marsh beyond seemed to vanish in the glow. "I come to say that I am sorry for my share of the quarrel. I lost my temper, and I beg your pardon for that. I was not very obliging about Mr. Clinton, but you had tried me very much. However, what you did wrong does not excuse me, I know, and if you like to come back, I'll make a new part as you wanted. I can't give him Charles's part, or the feather, but anything I can do, or give up of my own, I will. It's not because of to-night, for you know as well as I do that I do not care twopence what happens when I'm angry, and after all, we can only say that you've taken the things. But I wanted us to get through these holidays without quarreling, and I wanted you to enjoy them, and I want to try and be good to you, for you are my twin brother, and for my share of the quarrel I beg your pardon—I can do no more."

Some of this speech had been about as pleasant to say as eating cinders, and when it was done I felt a sudden sensation (very rare with me) of unendurable fatigue. As the last words left my lips the sun set, but my eyes were so be-dazzled that I am not sure that I should not have fallen, but for an unexpected support. What Philip had been thinking of during my speech I do not know, for I had avoided looking at him, but when it was done he threw the properties out of his arms, and flung them around me with the hug of a polar bear.

"*You* ill-tempered!" he roared. "You've the temper of an angel, or you would never have come after me like this. Isobel, I am a brute, I have behaved like a brute all the week, and I beg *your* pardon."

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I retract my wishes about crying, for when I do begin, I cry in such a very disagreeable way—no spring shower, but a perfect tempest of tears. Philip's unexpected generosity upset me, and I sobbed till I frightened him, and he said I was hysterical. The absurdity of this idea set me off into fits of laughing, which, oddly enough, seemed to distress him so much that I stopped at last, and found breath to say, "Then you'll come home?"

"If you'll have me. And never mind about Clinton, I'll get out of it. The truth is, Isobel, you and Alice did snub him from the first, and that vexed me; but I *am* disappointed in him. He does brag so, and I've had to take that fowling-piece to the gunsmith's already, so I know what it's worth. I did give Clinton a hint about it, and—would you believe it?—he laughed, and said he thought he had got the best of *that* bargain. I said 'I hope you have it, if it isn't an even one, for I should be very sorry to think *I* had cheated a friend!' But he either did not, or wouldn't see it. He's a second-rate sort of fellow, I'm sure, and I'm sorry I promised to let him act. But I'll get out of it, you sha'n't be bothered by him."

"No, no," said I, "if you promised I'd much rather. It won't bother me at all."

(It is certainly a much pleasanter kind of dispute when the struggle is to give, and not to take!)

"You can't fit him in now?" said Philip doubtfully.

"Oh, yes, I can." I felt sure that I could. I have often been short of temper for our amusements, but never of ideas. Philip tucked the properties under one arm, and me under the other, and as we ran homewards over the marsh, I threaded Mr. Clinton into the plot with perfect ease.

"We'll have a second Prince, and he shall have an enchanted shield, which shall protect him from you, though he can't kill you

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—for Charles must do that. He shall be in love with the Princess, too, but just when he and Charles are going to fight for her, the Fairy Godmother shall sprinkle him with the Waters of Memory, and break a spell which had made him forget his own Princess in a distant land. You know, Philip, if he *does* act well, he may make a capital part of it. It will be a splendid scene. We have two real metal swords, and as they are flashing in the air—enter the Fairy with the carved claret jug. When he is sprinkled he must drop his sword, and put his hands to his head. He will recall the picture of his own Princess, and draw it out and kiss it (I can lend him my locket miniature of great grand-papa). Charles and he must swear eternal friendship, and then he will pick up his sword, and exit right center, waving the golden shield, to find his Princess. It will look very well, and as he goes out the Princess can enter left in distraction about the combat, and she and Charles can fall in each other's arms, and be blessed by the Fairy."

"Capital!" said Philip. "What a head you have! But you're out of breath? We're running too fast."

"Not a bit," said I, "it refreshes me. Do you remember when you and I used to run hand in hand from the top to the bottom of Break-neck Hill? Oh, Philip, I do wish we could never quarrel any more! I think we might keep our tempers if we tried."

"*You* might," said Philip, "because you are good. But I shall always be a brute."

(Just what *I* said to Aunt Isobel! Must everyone learn his lessons for himself? I had a sort of unreasonable feeling that my experience ought to serve for the rest of our ill-tempered family into the bargain.)

Philip's spirits rose higher and higher. Of course he was de-

lighted to be out of the scrape. I am sure he was glad to be friendly again, and he was hotter than ever for the theatricals.

So was I. I felt certain that they would be successful now. But far above and beyond the comfort of things "coming right," and the pleasure of anticipated fun, my heart was rocked to a higher peace. In my small religious experiences I had never known this triumph, this thankfulness before. Circumstances, not self-control, had helped me out of previous quarrels, I had never really done battle, and gained a conquest over my besetting sin. Now, however imperfectly and awkwardly, I yet *had* fought. If Philip had been less generous I might have failed, but the effort had been real—and it had been successful. Henceforth my soul should fight with the prestige of victory, with the courage that comes of having striven and won, trusted and not been confounded.

The first person we met after we got in was Aunt Isobel. She had arrived in our absence. No doubt she had heard the whole affair, but she is very good, and never *gauche*, and she only said—

"Here come the stage-managers! Now what can I do to help? I have had some tea, and am ready to obey orders till the curtain rings up."

Boys do not carry things off well. Philip got very red, but I said—"Oh, please come to the nursery, Aunt Isobel. There are lots of things to do." She came, and was invaluable. I never said anything about the row to her, and she never said anything to me. That is what I call a friend!

The first thing Philip did was to unlock the property-box in his room and bring the Dragon and things back. The second thing he did was to mend the new scene by replacing the bit he had cut out, glueing canvas on behind it, and touching up with paint where it joined.

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We soon put straight what had been disarranged. Blinds were drawn, candles lighted, seats fixed, and the theater began to look like itself. Aunt Isobel and I were bringing in the footlights, when we saw Bobby at the extreme right of the stage wrapped in his cloak, and contemplating, with apparent satisfaction, twelve old hats and six pasteboard bandboxes which were spread before him.

"My dear Bobby, what are these?" said Aunt Isobel. Bobby hastily—almost stammeringly—explained.

"I am Twelve Travelers, you know, Aunt Isobel."

"Dear me!" said Aunt Isobel.

"I'll show you how I am going to do it," said Bobby.

"Here are twelve old hats—I have had such work to collect them!—and six bandboxes."

"Only six?" said Aunt Isobel with commendable gravity.

"But there are the lids," said Bobby, "six of them, and six boxes, make twelve, you know. I've only one cloak, but it's red on one side and blue on the other, and two kinds of buttons. Well; I come on left for the First Traveler, with my cloak the red side out, and this white chimney-pot hat."

"Ah!" said Aunt Isobel.

"And one of the bandboxes under my cloak. The Dragon attacks me in the center, and drives me off right, where I smash up the bandbox, which sounds like him crunching my bones. Then I roll the thunder, turn my cloak to the blue side, put on this wide-awake, and come on again with a bandbox lid and crunch that, and roll more thunder, and so on. I'm the Faithful Attendant and the Bereaved Father as well," added Bobby, with justifiable pride, "and I would have done the Dragon if they would have let me."

But even Bobby did not outdo the rest of us in willingness.

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Alice's efforts were obvious tokens of remorse; she waited on Philip, was attentive to Mr. Clinton (who, I think, to this day believes that he made himself especially acceptable to "the young ladies"), and surpassed herself on the stage. Charles does not "come round" so quickly, but at the last moment he came and offered to yield the white plume. I confess I was rather vexed with Mr. Clinton for accepting it, but Alice and I despoiled our best hats of their black ostrich feathers to make it up to Charles, and he said, with some dignity, that he should never have offered the white one if he had not meant it to be accepted.

One thing took us by surprise. We had had more trouble over the dressing of the new Prince than the costumes and make-up of all the rest of the characters together cost—he was only just torn from the big looking-glass by his "call" to the stage, and, to our amazement, he seemed decidedly unwilling to go on.

"It's a very odd thing, Miss Alice," said he in accents so pitiable that I did not wonder that Alice did her best to encourage him,—“it's a most extraordinary thing, but I feel quite nervous.”

"You'll be all right when you're once on," said Alice; "mind you don't forget that it depends on you to explain that it's an invincible shield."

"Which arm had I better wear it on?" said Mr. Clinton, shifting it nervously from side to side.

"The left, the left!" cried Alice. "Now you ought to be on."

"Oh, what shall I say?" cried our new hero.

"Say—'Devastating Monster! my arm is mortal, and my sword was forged by human fingers, but this shield is invincible as——' "

"Second Prince," called Charles impatiently, and Mr. Clinton was hustled on.

He was greeted with loud applause. He said afterwards that

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this put his part out of his head, that Alice had told him wrong, and that the shield was too small for him.

As a matter of fact he hammered and stammered and got himself and the piece into such confusion, that Philip lost patience as he lay awaiting his cue. With a fierce bellow he emerged from his cask, and roaring, "Avaunt, knight of the invincible shield and craven heart!" he crossed the stage with the full clatter of his canvas joints, and chased Mr. Clinton off at the left center.

Once behind the scenes, he refused to go on again.

He said that he had never played without a proper part at his uncle's in Dublin, and thought our plan quite a mistake. Besides which, he had got toothache, and preferred to join the audience, which he did, and the play went on without him.

I was acting as stage-manager in the intervals of my part, when I noticed Mr. Clinton (not the ex-Prince, but his father, the surgeon,) get up, and hastily leave his place among the spectators. But just as I was wondering at this, I was recalled to business by delay on the part of Bobby, who ought to have been on (with the lights down) as the Twelfth Traveler.

I found him at the left wing, with all the twelve hats fitted one over another, the whole pile resting on a chair.

"Bob, what are you after? You ought to be on."

"All right," said Bob, "Philip knows. He's lashing his tail and doing some business till I'm ready. Help me to put this cushion under my cloak for a humpback, will you? I didn't like the twelfth hat, it's too like the third one, so I'm going on as a Jew Peddler. Give me that box. Now!" And before I could speak a roar of applause had greeted Bobby as he limped on in his twelve hats, crying, "Oh, tear, oh, tear! dish the darkest night I ever shaw."

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But either we acted unusually well, or our audience was exceptionally kind, for it applauded everything and everybody till the curtain fell.

“Behind the scenes” is always a place of confusion after amateur theatricals; at least it used to be with us. We ran hither and thither, lost our every-day shoes, washed the paint from our faces, and mislaid any number of towels, and combs, and brushes, ate supper by snatches, congratulated ourselves on a successful evening, and were kissed all round by Granny, who came behind the scenes for the purpose.

All was over, and the guests were gone, when I gave an invitation to the others to come and make lemon-brew over my bedroom fire as an appropriate concluding festivity. (It had been suggested by Bobby.) I had not seen Philip for some time, but we were all astonished to hear that he had gone out. We kept his “brew” hot for him, and Charles and Bobby were both nodding—though they stoutly refused to go to bed,—when his step sounded in the corridor, and he knocked and came hastily in.

Everybody roused up.

“Oh, Philip, we’ve been wondering where you were! Here’s your brew, and we’ve each kept a little drop, to drink your good health.”

(“Mine is *all* pips,” observed Bobby as a parenthesis.)

But Philip was evidently thinking of something else.

“Isobel,” he said, standing by the table, as if he were making a speech, “I shall never forget your coming after me to-day. I told you you had the temper of an angel.”

“So did I,” said Alice.

“Hear! hear!” said Bobby, who was sucking his pips one by

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one and laying them by—"to plant in a pot," as he afterwards explained.

"You not only saved the theatricals," continued Philip, "you saved my life I believe."

No "situation" in the play had been half so startling as this. We remained open-mouthed and silent, whilst Philip sat down as if he were tired, and rested his head on his hands, which were dirty, and stained with something red.

"Haven't you heard about the accident?" he asked.

We all said "No."

"The 4.15 ran into the express where the lines cross, you know. Isobel, *there were only two first-class carriages, and everybody in them was killed but one man.* They have taken both his legs off, and he's not expected to live. Oh, poor fellow, he did groan so!"

Bobby burst into passionate tears, and Philip buried his head on his arms.

Neither Alice nor I could speak, but Charles got up and went round and stood by Philip.

"You've been helping," he said emphatically, "I know you have. You're a good fellow, Philip, and I beg your pardon for saucing you. I am going to forget about the football, too. I was going to have eaten raw meat, and dumb-belled, to make myself strong enough to thrash you," added Charles remorsefully.

"Eat a butcher's shop full, if you like," replied Philip with contempt. And I think it showed that Charles was beginning to practice forbearance, that he made no reply.

Some years have passed since those Twelfth Night theatricals. The Dragon has long been dissolved into his component scales, and we never have impromptu performances now. The passing

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fame which a terrible railway accident gave to our insignificant station has also faded. But it set a seal on our good resolutions which I may honestly say has not been lightly broken.

There, on the very spot where I had almost resolved never to forgive Philip, never to try to heal the miserable wounds of the family peace, I learned the news of the accident in which he might have been killed. Philip says that if anything could make him behave better to me, it is the thought that I saved his life, as he calls it. But if anything could help me to be good to him, surely it must be the remembrance of how nearly I did not save him.

I put Alice on an equality in our bedroom that night, and gave her part-ownership of the text and the picture. We are very happy together.

We have all tried to improve, and I think I may say we have been fairly successful.

More than once I have heard (one does hear many things people say behind one's back) that new acquaintances—people who have only known us lately—have expressed astonishment, not unmixed with a generous indignation, on hearing that we were ever described by our friends as—A VERY ILL-TEMPERED FAMILY.

LOB LIE-BY-THE-FIRE

OR

THE LUCK OF LINGBOROUGH

INTRODUCTORY

LOB LIE-BY-THE-FIRE—the Lubber-fiend, as Milton calls him—is a rough kind of Brownie or House Elf, supposed to haunt some north-country homesteads, where he does the work of the farm laborers, for no grander wages than

“——to earn his cream-bowl duly set.”

Not that he is insensible of the pleasures of rest, for

“——When, in one night, ere glimpse of morn
His shadowy flail hath threshed the corn
That ten day-laborers could not end,
Then lies him down the Lubber-fiend,
And, stretched out all the chimney's length,
Basks at the fire his hairy strength.”

It was said that a Lob Lie-by-the-fire once haunted the little old Hall at Lingborough. It was an old stone house on the Borders, and seemed to have got its tints from the gray skies that hung above it. It was cold-looking without, but cosy within, “like

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a north-country heart," said Miss Kitty, who was a woman of sentiment, and kept a commonplace book.

It was long before Miss Kitty's time that Lob Lie-by-the-fire first came to Lingborough. Why and whence he came is not recorded, nor when and wherefore he withdrew his valuable help, which, as wages rose, and prices rose also, would have been more welcome than ever.

This tale professes not to record more of him than comes within the memory of man.

Whether (as Fletcher says) he were the son of a witch, if curds and cream won his heart, and new clothes put an end to his labors, it does not pretend to tell. His history is less known than that of any other sprite. It may be embodied in some oral tradition that shall one day be found; but as yet the mists of forgetfulness hide it from the story-teller of to-day as deeply as the sea fogs are wont to lie between Lingborough and the adjacent coast.

THE LITTLE OLD LADIES.—ALMS DONE IN SECRET

The little old ladies of Lingborough were heiresses.

Not, mind you, in the sense of being the children of some mushroom millionaire, with more money than manners, and (as Miss Betty had seen with her own eyes, on the daughter of a manufacturer who shall be nameless) dresses so fine in quality and be-furbelowed in construction as to cost a good quarter's income (of the little old ladies), but trailed in the dirt from "beggarly extravagance," or kicked out behind at every step by feet which fortune (and a very large fortune, too) had never taught to walk properly.

"And how should she know how to walk?" said Miss Betty.

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"Her mother can't have taught her, poor body! that ran through the streets of Leith, with a creel on her back, as a lassie; and got out of her coach lined with satin, with a bounce, all in a heap, her dress caught, and her stockings exposed (among ourselves, ladies!) like some good wife that's afraid to be late for the market. Aye, aye! Malcolm Midden—good man!—made a fine pocket of silver in a dirty trade, but his women 'll jerk, and toss, and bounce, and fuss; and fluster for a generation or two yet, for all the silks and satins he can buy 'em."

From this it will be seen that the little old ladies inherited some prejudices of their class, and were also endowed with a shrewdness of observation common among all classes of north-country women.

But to return to what else they inherited. They were heiresses, as the last representatives of a family as old in that Border country as the bold blue hills which broke its horizon. They were heiresses also in default of heirs male to their father, who got the land from his uncle's dying childless—sons being scarce in the family. They were heiresses, finally, to the place and the farm, to the furniture that was made when folk seasoned their wood before they worked it, to a diamond brooch which they wore by turns, besides two diamond rings, and two black lace shawls, that had belonged to their mother and their Auntie Jean, long since departed thither where neither moth nor rust corrupt the true riches.

As to the incomings of Lingborough, "It was nobody's business but their own," as Miss Betty said to the lawyer who was their man of business, and whom they consulted on little matters of rent and repairs at as much length, and with as much formal solemnity, as would have gone elsewhere to the changing hands of half a million of money. Without violating their confidence,

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however, we may say that the estate paid its way, kept them in silk stockings, and gave them new tabbinet dresses once in three years. It supplied their wants the better that they had inherited house plenishing from their parents, "which they thanked their stars was not made of tag-rag, and would last their time," and that they were quite content with an old home and old neighbors, and never desired to change the grand air that blew about their native hills for worse, in order to be poisoned with bad butter, and make the fortunes of extortionate lodging-house keepers.

The rental of Lingborough did more. How much more the little old ladies did not know themselves, and no one else shall know, till that which was done in secret is proclaimed from the housetops.

For they had had a religious scruple, founded upon a literal reading of the scriptural command that a man's left hand should not know what his right hand gives in alms, and this scruple had been ingeniously set at rest by the parson, who, failing in an attempt to explain the force of eastern hyperbole to the little ladies' satisfaction, had said that Miss Betty, being the elder, and the head of the house, might be likened to the right hand, and Miss Kitty, as the younger, to the left, and that if they pursued their good works without ostentation, or desiring the applause even of each other, the spirit of the injunction would be fulfilled.

The parson was a good man and a clever. He had (as Miss Betty justly said) a very spiritual piety. But he was also gifted with much shrewdness in dealing with the various members of his flock. And his word was law to the sisters.

Thus it came about that the little ladies' charities were not known even to each other—that Miss Betty turned her morning camlet twice instead of once, and Miss Kitty denied herself in sugar, to carry out benevolent little projects which were accom-

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plished in secret, and of which no record appears in the Lingborough ledger.

AT TEA WITH MRS. DUNMAW

The little ladies of Lingborough were very sociable, and there was, as they said, "as much gaiety as was good for anyone" within their reach. There were at least six houses at which they drank tea from time to time, all within a walk. As hosts or guests, you always met the same people, which was a friendly arrangement, and the programmes of the entertainments were so uniform, that no one could possibly feel awkward. The best of manners and home-made wines distinguished these tea parties, where the company was strictly genteel, if a little faded. Supper was served at nine, and the parson and the lawyer played whist for love with different partners on different evenings with strict impartiality.

Small jealousies are apt to be weak points in small societies, but there was a general acquiescence in the belief that the parson had a friendly preference for the little ladies of Lingborough.

He lived just beyond them, too, which led to his invariably escorting them home. Miss Betty and Miss Kitty would not for worlds have been so indelicate as to take this attention for granted, though it was a custom of many years' standing. The older sister always went through the form of asking the younger to "see if the servant had come," and at this signal the parson always bade the lady of the house good night, and respectfully proffered his services as an escort to Lingborough.

It was a lovely evening in June, when the little ladies took tea with the widow of General Dunmaw at her cottage, not quite two miles from their own home.

It was a memorable evening. The tea party was an agree-

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able one. The little ladies had new tabbinets on, and Miss Kitty wore the diamond brooch. Miss Betty had played whist with the parson, and the younger sister (perhaps because of the brooch) had been favored with a good deal of conversation with the lawyer. It was an honor, because the lawyer bore the reputation of an *esprit fort*, and was supposed to have, as a rule, a contempt for feminine intellects, which good manners led him to veil under an almost officious politeness in society. But honors are apt to be uneasy blessings, and this one was at least as harassing as gratifying. For a somewhat monotonous vein of sarcasm, a painful power of producing puns, and a dexterity in suggesting doubts of everything, were the main foundation of his intellectual reputation, and Miss Kitty found them hard to cope with. And it was a warm evening.

But women have much courage, especially to defend a friend or a faith, and the less Miss Kitty found herself prepared for the conflict the harder she esteemed it her duty to fight. She fought for Church and State, for parsons and poor people, for the sincerity of her friends, the virtues of the Royal Family, the merit of Dr. Drugson's prescriptions, and for her favorite theory that there is some good in everyone and some happiness to be found everywhere.

She rubbed nervously at the diamond brooch with her thin little mittened hands. She talked very fast; and if the lawyer were guilty of feeling any ungallant indifference to her observations, she did not so much as hear his, and her cheeks became so flushed that Mrs. Dunmaw crossed the room in her China crape shawl and said, "My dear Miss Kitty, I'm sure you feel the heat very much. Do take my fan, which is larger than yours."

But Miss Kitty was saved a reply, for at this moment Miss

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Betty turned on the sofa, and said, "Dear Kitty, will you kindly see if the servant——"

And the parson closed the volume of "Friendship's Offering," which lay before him, and advanced towards Mrs. Dunmaw and took leave in his own dignified way.

Miss Kitty was so much flustered that she had not even presence of mind to look for the servant, who had never been ordered to come, but the parson relieved her by saying in his round, deep voice, "I hope you will not refuse me the honor of seeing you home, since our roads happen to lie together." And she was glad to get into the fresh air, and beyond the doubtful compliments of the lawyer's nasal suavity—"You have been very severe upon me to-night, Miss Kitty. I'm sure I had no notion I should find so powerful an antagonist," etc.

MIDSUMMER EVE.—A LOST DIAMOND

It was Midsummer Eve. The long light of the North was pale and clear, and the western sky shone luminous through the fir-wood that bordered the road. Under such dim lights colors deepen, and the great bushes of broom, that were each one mass of golden blossoms, blazed like fairy watch-fires up the lane.

Miss Kitty leaned on the left arm of the parson and Miss Betty on his right. She chatted gaily, which left her younger sister at leisure to think of all the convincing things she had not remembered to say to the lawyer, as the evening breeze cooled her cheeks.

"A grand prospect for the crops, sir," said Miss Betty; "I never saw the broom so beautiful." But as she leaned forward to look at the yellow blaze which foretells good luck to farmers, as it shone in the hedge on the left-hand side of the road, she

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caught sight of the brooch in Miss Kitty's lace shawl. Through a gap in the wood the light from the western sky danced among the diamonds. But where one of the precious stones should have been, there was a little black hole.

"Sister, you've lost a stone out of your brooch!" screamed Miss Betty. The little ladies were well-trained, and even in that moment of despair Miss Betty would not hint that her sister's ornaments were not her sole property.

When Miss Kitty burst into tears the parson was a little astonished as well as distressed. Men are apt to be so, not perhaps because women cry on such very small accounts, as because the full reason does not always transpire. Tears are often the climax of nervous exhaustion, and this is commonly the result of more causes than one. Ostensibly Miss Kitty was "upset" by the loss of the diamond, but she also wept away a good deal of the vexation of her unequal conflict with the sarcastic lawyer, and of all this the parson knew nothing.

Miss Betty knew nothing of that, but she knew enough of things in general to feel sure the diamond was not all the matter.

"What is amiss, sister Kitty?" said she. "Have you hurt yourself? Do you feel ill? Did you know the stone was out?—I hope you're not going to be hysterical, sister Kitty," added Miss Betty anxiously; "there never was a hysterical woman in our family yet."

"Oh, dear, no, sister Betty," sobbed Miss Kitty; "but it's all my fault. I know I was fidgeting with it whilst I was talking; and it's a punishment on my fidgety ways, and for ever presuming to wear it at all, when you're the head of the family, and solely entitled to it. And I shall never forgive myself if it's lost, and if it's found I'll never, never wear it any more." And as she deluged her best company pocket-handkerchief (for the useful

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one was in a big pocket under her dress, and could not be got at, the parson being present), Church, State, the Royal Family, the family Bible, her highest principles, her dearest affections, and the diamond brooch, all seemed to swim before her disturbed mind in one sea of desolation.

There was not a kinder heart than the parson's towards women and children in distress. He tucked the little ladies again under his arms, and insisted upon going back to Mrs. Dunmaw's, searching the lane as they went. In the pulpit or the drawing-room a ready anecdote never failed him, and on this occasion he had several. Tales of lost rings, and even single gems, recovered in the most marvelous manner and the most unexpected places—dug up in gardens, served up to dinner in fishes, and so forth. "Never," said Miss Kitty, afterwards, "never, to her dying day, could she forget his kindness."

She clung to the parson as a support under both her sources of trouble, but Miss Betty ran on and back, and hither and thither, looking for the diamond. Miss Kitty and the parson looked, too, and how many aggravating little bits of glass and silica, and shining nothings and good-for-nothings there are in the world, no one would believe who has not looked for a lost diamond on a high road.

But another story of found jewels was to be added to the parson's stock. He had bent his long back for about the eighteenth time, when such a shimmer as no glass or silica can give flashed into his eyes, and he caught up the diamond out of the dust, and it fitted exactly into the little black hole.

Miss Kitty uttered a cry, and at the same moment Miss Betty, who was farther down the road, did the same, and these were followed by a third, which sounded like a mocking echo of both. And then the sisters rushed together.

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"A most miraculous discovery!" gasped Miss Betty.

"You must have passed the very spot before," cried Miss Kitty.

"Though I'm sure, sister, what to do with it now we have found it I don't know," said Miss Betty, rubbing her nose, as she was wont to do when puzzled.

"It shall be taken better care of for the future, sister Betty," said Miss Kitty, penitently. "Though how it got out I can't think now."

"Why, bless my soul! you don't suppose it got there of itself, sister?" snapped Miss Betty. "How it did get there is another matter."

"I feel pretty confident about it, for my own part," smiled the parson as he joined them.

"Do you mean to say, sir, that you knew it was there?" asked Miss Betty, solemnly.

"I didn't know the precise spot, my dear madam, but——"

"You didn't see it, sir, I hope?" said Miss Betty.

"Bless me, my dear madam, I found it!" cried the parson.

Miss Betty bridled and bit her lip.

"I never contradict a clergyman, sir," said she, "but I can only say that if you did see it, it was not like your usual humanity to leave it lying there."

"Why

I've got it in my hand, ma'am!"

He's got it in his hand, sister!"

cried the parson and Miss Kitty in one breath. Miss Betty was too much puzzled to be polite.

"What are you talking about?" she asked.

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"The diamond, oh, dear, oh, dear! *The diamond!*" cried Miss Kitty. "But what are you talking about, sister?"

"*The Baby,*" said Miss Betty.

WHAT MISS BETTY FOUND

It was found under a broom-bush. Miss Betty was poking her nose near the bank that bordered the wood, in her hunt for the diamond, when she caught sight of a mass of yellow of a deeper tint than the mass of broom-blossom above it, and this was the baby.

This vivid color, less opaque than "deep chrome" and a shade more orange, seems to have a peculiar attraction for wandering tribes. Gypsies use it, and it is a favorite color with Indian squaws. To the last dirty rag it is effective, whether it flutters near a tent on Bagshot Heath, or in some wigwam doorway makes a point of brightness against the gray shadows of the pine forest.

A large kerchief of this, wound about its body, was the baby's only robe, but he seemed quite comfortable in it when Miss Betty found him, sleeping on a pillow of deep hair moss, his little brown fists closed as fast as his eyes, and a crimson toadstool grasped in one of them.

When Miss Betty screamed the baby awoke, and his long black lashes tickled his cheeks and made him wink and cry. But by the time she returned with her sister and the parson, he was quite happy again, gazing up with dark eyes full of delight into the glowing broom-bush, and fighting the evening breeze with his feet, which were entangled in the folds of the yellow cloth, and with the battered toadstool which was still in his hand.

"And, indeed, sir," said Miss Betty, who had rubbed her nose till it looked like the twin toadstool to that which the baby was

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flourishing in her face, "you won't suppose I would have left the poor little thing another moment, to catch its death of cold on a warm evening like this; but having no experience of such cases, and remembering that murder at the inn in the Black Valley, and that the body was not allowed to be moved till the constables had seen it, I didn't feel to know how it might be with foundlings, and——"

But still Miss Betty did not touch the bairn. She was not accustomed to children. But the parson had christened too many babies to be afraid of them, and he picked up the little fellow in a moment, and tucked the yellow rag round him, and then, addressing the little ladies precisely as if they were sponsors, he asked in his deep round voice, "Now where on the face of the earth are the vagabonds who have deserted this child?"

The little ladies did not know, the broom-bushes were silent, and the question has remained unanswered from that day to this.

THE BABY, THE LAWYER, AND THE PARSON

There were no railways near Lingborough at this time. The coach ran three times a week, and a walking postman brought the letters from the town to the small hamlets. Telegraph wires were unknown, and yet news traveled quite as fast then as it does now, and in the course of the following morning all the neighborhood knew that Miss Betty had found a baby under a broom bush, and the lawyer called in the afternoon to inquire how the ladies found themselves after the tea party at Mrs. General Dunmaw's.

Miss Kitty was glad on the whole. She felt nervous, but ready for a renewal of hostilities. Several clinching arguments had occurred to her in bed last night, and after hastily looking up a few lines from her commonplace book, which always made her

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cry when she read them, but which she hoped to be able to hurl at the lawyer with a steady voice, she followed Miss Betty to the drawing-room.

It was half a relief and half a disappointment to find that the lawyer was quite indifferent to the subject of their late contest. He overflowed with compliments; was quite sure he must have had the worst of the argument, and positively dying of curiosity to hear about the baby.

The little ladies were very full of the subject themselves. An active search for the baby's relations, conducted by the parson, the clerk, the farm-bailiff, the constable, the cowherd, and several supernumeraries, had so far proved quite vain. The country folk were most anxious to assist, especially by word of mouth. Except a small but sturdy number who had seen nothing, they had all seen "tramps," but unluckily no two could be got together whose accounts of the tramps themselves, of the hour at which they were seen, or of the direction in which they went, would tally with each other.

The little ladies were quite alive to the possibility that the child's parents might never be traced, indeed the matter had been constantly before their minds ever since the parson had carried the baby to Lingborough, and laid it in the arms of Thomasina, the servant.

Miss Betty had sat long before her toilette-table that evening, gazing vacantly at the looking-glass. Not that the reflection of the eight curl-papers she had neatly twisted up was conveyed to her brain. She was in a brown study, during which the following thoughts passed through her mind, and they all pointed one way:

That that fine little fellow was not to blame for his people's misconduct.

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That they would never be found.

That it would probably be the means of the poor child's ruin, body and soul, if they were.

That the master of the neighboring workhouse bore a bad character.

That a child costs nothing to keep—where cows are kept, too—for years.

That just at the age when a boy begins to eat dreadfully and wear out his clothes, he is very useful on a farm (though not for these reasons).

That Thomasina had taken to him.

That there need be no nonsense about it, as he could be brought up in his proper station in life in the kitchen and the farmyard.

That tramps have souls.

That he would be taught to say his prayers.

Miss Betty said hers, and went to bed; but all through that midsummer night the baby kept her awake, or flaunted his yellow robe and crimson toadstool through her dreams.

The morning brought no change in Miss Betty's views, but she felt doubtful as to how her sister would receive them. Would she regard them as foolish and unpractical, and her respect for Miss Betty's opinion be lessened thenceforward?

The fear was needless. Miss Kitty was romantic and imaginative. She had carried the baby through his boyhood about the Lingborough fields whilst she was dressing; and he was attending her own funeral in the capacity of an attached and faithful servant, in black livery with worsted frogs, as she sprinkled salt on her buttered toast at breakfast, when she was startled from this affecting daydream by Miss Betty's voice.

"Dear sister Kitty, I wish to consult you as to our plans in

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the event of those wicked people who deserted the baby not being found."

The little ladies resolved that not an inkling of their benevolent scheme must be betrayed to the lawyer. But they dissembled awkwardly, and the tone in which they spoke of the tramp-baby roused the lawyer's quick suspicions. He had a real respect for the little ladies, and was kindly anxious to save them from their own indiscretion.

"My dear ladies," said he, "I do hope your benevolence—may I say your romantic benevolence?—of disposition is not tempting you to adopt this gypsy waif?"

"I hope we know what is due to ourselves, and to the estate—small as it is—sir," said Miss Betty, "as well as to Providence, too well to attempt to raise any child, however handsome, from that station of life in which he was born."

"Bless me, madam! I never dreamed you would adopt a beggar child as your heir; but I hope you mean to send it to the workhouse, if the gypsy tramps it belongs to are not to be found?"

"We have not made up our minds, sir, as to the course we propose to pursue," said Miss Betty, with outward dignity proportioned to her inward doubts.

"My dear ladies," said the lawyer anxiously, "let me implore you not to be rash. To adopt a child in the most favorable circumstances is the greatest of risks. But if your benevolence *will* take that line, pray adopt some little boy out of one of your tenants' families. Even your teaching will not make him brilliant, as he is likely to inherit the minimum of intellectual capacity; but he will learn his catechism, probably grow up respectable, and possibly grateful, since his forefathers have (so Miss Kitty assures me) had all these virtues for generations. But this baby is

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the child of a heathen, barbarous, and wandering race. The propensities of the vagabonds who have deserted him are in every drop of his blood. All the parsons in the diocese won't make a Christian of him, and when (after anxieties I shudder to foresee) you flatter yourselves that he is civilized, he will run away and leave his shoes and stockings behind him."

"He has a soul to be saved, if he is a gypsy," said Miss Kitty, hysterically.

"The soul, my dear Miss Kitty"—began the lawyer, facing round upon her.

"Don't say anything dreadful about the soul, sir, I beg," said Miss Betty, firmly. And then she added in a conciliatory tone, "Won't you look at the little fellow, sir? I have no doubt his relations are shocking people; but when you see his innocent little face and his beautiful eyes, I think you'll say yourself that if he were a duke's son he couldn't be a finer child."

"My experience of babies is so limited, Miss Betty," said the lawyer, "that really—if you'll excuse me—but I can quite imagine him. I have before now been tempted myself to adopt stray—puppies, when I have seen them in the round, soft, innocent, bright-eyed stage. And when they have grown up in the hands of more credulous friends into lanky, ill-conditioned, misconducted curs, I have congratulated myself that I was not misled by the graces of an age at which ill-breeding is less apparent than later in life."

The little ladies both rose. "If you see no difference, sir," said Miss Betty in her stateliest manner, "between a babe with an immortal soul and the beasts that perish, it is quite useless to prolong the conversation."

"Reason is apt to be useless when opposed to the generous

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impulses of a sex so full of sentiment as yours, madam," said the lawyer, rising also. "Permit me to take a long farewell, since it is improbable that our friendship will resume its old position until your *protégé* has—run away."

The words "long farewell" and "old friendship" were quite sufficient to soften wrath in the tender hearts of the little ladies. But the lawyer had really lost his temper, and, before Miss Betty had decided how to offer the olive branch without conceding her principles he was gone.

The weather was warm. The little ladies were heated by discussion and the parson by vain scouring of the country on foot, when they asked his advice upon their project, and related their conversation with the lawyer. The two gentlemen had so little in common that the parson felt it his duty not to let his advice be prejudiced by this fact. For some moments he sat silent, then he began to walk about as if he were composing a sermon; then he stopped before the little ladies (who were sitting as stiffly on the sofa as if it were a pew) and spoke as if he were delivering one.

"If you ask me, dear ladies, whether it is your duty to provide for this child because you found him, I say that there is no such obligation. If you ask if I think it wise in your own interests, and hopeful as to the boy's career, I am obliged to agree with your legal adviser. Vagabond ways are seldom cured in one generation, and I think it is quite probable that, after much trouble and anxiety spent upon him, he may go back to a wandering life. But, Miss Betty," continued the parson in deepening tones, as he pounded his left palm with his right fist for want of a pulpit, "if you ask me whether I believe any child of any race is born incapable of improvement, and beyond benefit from the charities we owe to each other, I should deny my faith if I could

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say yes. I shall not, madam, confuse the end of your connection with him with the end of your training in him, even if he runs away, or fancy that I see the one because I see the other. I do not pretend to know how much evil he inherits from his forefathers as accurately as our graphic friend; but I do know that he has a Father Whose image is also to be found in His children—not quite effaced in any of them—and Whose care of this one will last when yours, madam, may seem to have been in vain.”

As the little ladies rushed forward and each shook a hand of the parson, he felt some compunction for his speech.

“I fear I am encouraging you in grave indiscretion,” said he. “But, indeed, my dear ladies, I am quite against your project, for you do not realize the anxieties and disappointments that are before you, I am sure. The child will give you infinite trouble. I think he will run away. And yet I cannot in good conscience say that I believe love’s labor must be lost. He may return to the woods and wilds; but I hope he will carry something with him.”

“Did the reverend gentleman mean Miss Betty’s teaspoons?” asked the lawyer, stroking his long chin, when he was told what the parson had said.

BABYHOOD—PRETTY FLOWERS—THE ROSE-COLORED TULIPS

The matter of the baby’s cap disturbed the little ladies. It seemed so like the beginning of a fulfilment of the lawyer’s croakings.

Miss Kitty had made it. She had never seen a baby without a cap before, and the sight was unusual, if not indecent. But Miss Kitty was a quick needlewoman, and when the new cap was

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fairly tied over the thick crop of silky black hair, the baby looked so much less like Puck, and so much more like the rest of the baby world, that it was quite a relief.

Miss Kitty's feelings may therefore be imagined when, going to the baby just after the parson's departure, she found him in open rebellion against his cap. It had been tied on whilst he was asleep, and his eyes were no sooner open than he commenced the attack. He pulled with one little brown hand and tugged with the other; he dragged a rosette over his nose and got the frills into his eyes; he worried it as a puppy worries your handkerchief if you tie it round its face and tell it to "look like a grandmother." At last the strings gave way, and he cast it triumphantly out of the clothes-basket which served him for cradle.

Successive efforts to induce him to wear it proved vain, so Thomasina said the weather was warm and his hair was very thick, and she parted this and brushed it, and Miss Kitty gave the cap to the farm-bailiff's baby, who took to it as kindly as a dumpling to a pudding-cloth.

How the boy was ever kept inside his christening clothes, Thomasina said she did not know. But when he got into the parson's arms he lay quite quiet, which was a good omen. That he might lack no advantage, Miss Betty stood godmother for him, and the parish clerk and the sexton were his godfathers.

He was named John.

"A plain, sensible name," said Miss Betty. "And while we are about it," she added, "we may as well choose his surname. For a surname he must have, and the sooner it is decided upon the better."

Miss Kitty had made a list of twenty-seven of her favorite Christian names, which Miss Betty had sternly rejected, that everything might be plain, practical, and respectable at the outset

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of the tramp-child's career. For the same reason she refused to adopt Miss Kitty's suggestions for a surname.

"It's so seldom there's a chance of *choosing* a surname for anybody, sister," said Miss Kitty, "it seems a pity not to choose a pretty one."

"Sister Kitty," said Miss Betty, "don't be romantic. The boy is to be brought up in that station of life for which one syllable is ample. I should have called him Smith if that had not been Thomasina's name. As it is I propose to call him Broom. He was found under a bush of broom, and it goes very well with John, and sounds plain and respectable."

So Miss Betty bought a Bible, and on the fly-leaf of it she wrote in her fine, round, gentlewoman's writing—"John Broom. *With good wishes for his welfare, temporal and eternal. From a sincere friend.*" And when the inscription was dry the Bible was wrapped in brown paper, and put by in Thomasina's trunk till John Broom should come to years of discretion.

He was slow to reach them, though in other respects he grew fast.

When he began to walk he would walk barefoot. To be out of doors was his delight, but on the threshold of the house he always sat down and discarded his shoes and stockings. Thomasina bastinadoed the soles of his feet with the soles of his shoes "to teach him the use of them," so she said. But Miss Kitty sighed, and thought of the lawyer's prediction.

There was no blinking the fact that the child was as troublesome as he was pretty. The very demon of mischief danced in his black eyes, and seemed to possess his feet and fingers as if with quicksilver. And if, as Thomasina said, you "never knew what he would be at next," you might also be pretty sure that it would be something he ought to have left undone.

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John Broom early developed a taste for glass and crockery, and as the china cupboard was in that part of the house to which he by social standing also belonged, he had many chances to seize upon cups, jugs, and dishes. If detected with anything that he ought not to have had, it was his custom to drop the forbidden toy and toddle off as fast as his unpractised feet would carry him. The havoc which this caused amongst the glass and china was bewildering in a household where tea-sets and dinner-sets had passed from generation to generation, where slapdash, giddy-pated kitchenmaids never came, where Miss Betty washed the best teacups in the parlor, where Thomasina was more careful than her mistress, and the breaking of a single plate was a serious matter, and, if beyond riveting, a misfortune.

Thomasina soon found that her charge was safest, as he was happiest, out of doors. A very successful device was to shut him up in the drying-ground, and tell him to "pick the pretty flowers." John Broom preferred flowers even to china cups with gilding on them. He gathered nosegays of daisies and buttercups, and the winning way in which he would present these to the little ladies atoned, in their benevolent eyes, for many a smashed teacup.

But the tramp-baby's restless spirit was soon weary of the drying-room, and he set forth one morning in search of "fresh fields and pastures new." He had seated himself on the threshold to take off his shoes, when he heard the sound of Thomasina's footsteps, and, hastily staggering to his feet, toddled forth without further delay. The sky was blue above him, the sun was shining, and the air was very sweet. He ran for a bit and then tumbled, and picked himself up again, and got a fresh impetus, and so on till he reached the door of the kitchen garden, which was open. It was an old-fashioned kitchen-garden with flowers

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in the borders. There were single rose-colored tulips which had been in the garden as long as Miss Betty could remember, and they had been so increased by dividing the clumps that they now stretched in two rich lines of color down both sides of the long walk. And John Broom saw them.

"Pick the pretty f'owers, love," said he, in imitation of Thomasina's patronising tone, and forthwith beginning at the end, he went steadily to the top of the right-hand border, mowing the rose-colored tulips as he went.

Meanwhile, when Thomasina came to look for him, he could not be found, and when all the back premises and the drying-ground had been searched in vain, she gave the alarm to the little ladies.

Miss Kitty's vivid imagination leaped at once to the conclusion that the child's vagabond relations had fetched him away, and she became rigid with alarm. But Miss Betty rushed out into the shrubbery, and Miss Kitty took a whiff of her vinaigrette and followed her.

When they came at last to the kitchen-garden, Miss Betty's grief for the loss of John Broom did not prevent her observing that there was something odd about the borders, and when she got to the top, and found that all the tulips had been picked from one side, she sank down on the roller which happened to be lying beside her.

And John Broom staggered up to her, and crying, "For 'oo, Miss Betty," fell headlong with a sheaf of rose-colored tulips into her lap.

As he did not offer any to Miss Kitty, her better judgment was not warped, and she said, "You must slap him, sister Betty."

"Put out your hand, John Broom," said Miss Betty, much agitated.

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And John Broom, who was quite composed, put out both his little grubby paws so trustfully that Miss Betty had not the heart to strike him. But she scolded him, "Naughty boy!" and she pointed to the tulips and shook her head. John Broom looked thoughtfully at them, and shook his.

"Naughty boy!" repeated Miss Betty, and she added in very impressive tones, "John Broom's a very naughty boy!"

After which she took him to Thomasina, and Miss Kitty collected the rose-colored tulips and put them into water in the best old china punch-bowl.

In the course of the afternoon she peeped into the kitchen, where John Broom sat on the floor, under the window, gazing thoughtfully up into the sky.

"As good as gold, bless his little heart!" murmured Miss Kitty. For as his feet were tucked under him, she did not know that he had just put his shoes and stockings into the pig-tub, into which he all but fell himself from the exertion. He did not hear Miss Kitty, and thought on. He wanted to be out again, and he had a tantalizing remembrance of the ease with which the tender, juicy stalks of the tulips went snap, snap, in that new place of amusement he had discovered. Thomasina looked into the kitchen and went away again. When she had gone, John Broom went away also.

He went both faster and steadier on his bare feet. And when he got into the kitchen-garden, it recalled Miss Betty to his mind. And he shook his head, and said, "Naughty boy!" And then he went up the left-hand border, mowing the tulips as he went; after which he trotted home, and met Thomasina at the back door. And he hugged the sheaf of rose-colored tulips in his arms, and said, "John Broom a very naughty boy!"

Thomasina was not sentimental, and she slapped him well—

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his hands for picking the tulips and his feet for going barefoot.

But his feet had to be slapped with Thomasina's slipper, for his own shoes could not be found.

EDUCATION—FIRESIDE TALES

In spite of all his pranks, John Broom did not lose the favor of his friends. Thomasina spoiled him, and Miss Betty and Miss Kitty tried not to do so.

The parson had said, "Treat the child fairly. Bring him up as he will have to live hereafter. Don't make him half pet and half servant." And following this advice, and her own resolve that there should be "no nonsense" in the matter, Miss Betty had made it a rule that he should not be admitted to the parlor. It bore more heavily on the tender hearts of the little ladies than on the light heart of John Broom, and led to their waylaying him in the passages and gardens with little gifts, unknown to each other. And when Miss Kitty kissed his newly-washed cheeks, and pronounced them "like ripe russets," Miss Betty murmured, "Be judicious, sister Kitty;" and Miss Kitty would correct any possible ill effects by saying, "Now make your bow to your betters, John Broom, and say, 'Thank you, ma'am!'" which was accomplished by the child's giving a tug to the forelock of his thick black hair, with a world of mischief in his eyes.

When he was old enough, the little ladies sent him to the village school.

The total failure of their hopes for his education was not the smallest of the disappointments Miss Betty and Miss Kitty endured on his behalf. The quarrel with the lawyer had been made up long ago, and though there was always a touch of raillery in his inquiries after "the young gypsy," he had once said, "If he

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turns out anything of a genius at school, I might find a place for him in the office, bye-and-bye." The lawyer was kind-hearted in his own fashion, and on this hint Miss Kitty built up hopes, which unhappily were met by no responsive ambition in John Broom.

As to his fitness to be an errand boy, he could not carry a message from the kitchen to the cowhouse without stopping by the way to play with the yard-dog, and a hedgehog in the path would probably have led him astray, if Thomasina had had a fit and he had been despatched for the doctor.

During school hours he spent most of his time under the fool's-cap when he was not playing truant. With his schoolmates he was good friends. If he was seldom out of mischief, he was seldom out of temper. He could beat any boy at a foot race (without shoes); he knew the notes and nests of every bird that sang, and whatever an old pocketknife is capable of, that John Broom could and would do with it for his fellows.

Miss Betty had herself tried to teach him to read, and she continued to be responsible for his religious instruction. She had tried to stir up his industry by showing him the Bible, and promising that when he could read it he should have it for his "very own." But he either could not or would not apply himself, so the prize lay unearned in Thomasina's trunk. But he would listen for any length of time to Scripture stories, if they were read or told to him, especially to the history of Elisha, and the adventures of the Judges.

Indeed, since he could no longer be shut up in the drying-ground, Thomasina had found that he was never so happy and so safe as when he was listening to tales, and many a long winter evening he lay idle on the kitchen hearth, with his head on the sheep dog, whilst the more industrious Thomasina plied her knitting-needles, as she sat in the ingle-nook, with the flickering fire-

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light playing among the plaits of her large cap, and told tales of the countryside.

Not that John Broom was her only hearer. Annie "the lass" sat by the hearth also, and Thomasina took care that she did not "sit with her hands before her." And a little farther away sat the cowherd.

He had a sleeping-room above the barn, and took his meals in the house. By Miss Betty's desire he always went in to family prayers after supper, when he sat as close as possible to the door, under an uncomfortable consciousness that Thomasina did not think his boots clean enough for the occasion, and would find something to pick off the carpet as she followed him out, however hardly he might have used the door-scraper beforehand.

It might be a difficult matter to decide which he liked best, beer or John Broom. But next to these he liked Thomasina's stories.

Thomasina was kind to him. With all his failings and the dirt on his boots, she liked him better than the farm-bailiff. The farm-bailiff was thrifty and sensible and faithful, and Thomasina was faithful and sensible and thrifty, and they each had a tendency to claim the monopoly of those virtues. Notable people complain, very properly, of thriftless and untidy ones, but they sometimes agree better with them than with rival notabilities. And so Thomasina's broad face beamed benevolently as she bid the cowherd "draw up" to the fire, and he who (like Thomasina) was a native of the country, would confirm the marvels she related, with a proper pride in the wonderful district to which they both belonged.

He would help her out sometimes with names and dates in a local biography. By his own account he knew the man who was murdered at the inn in the Black Valley so intimately that it

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turned Annie the lass as white as a dish-cloth to sit beside him. If Thomasina said that folk were yet alive who had seen the little green men dance in Dawborough Croft, the cowherd would smack his knees and cry, "Scores on 'em!" And when she whispered of the white figure which stood at the cross roads after midnight, he testified to having seen it himself—tall beyond mortal height, and pointing four ways at once. He had a legend of his own, too, which Thomasina sometimes gave him the chance of telling, of how he was followed home one moonlight night by a black Something as big as a young calf, which "wimmled and wammled" around him till he fell senseless into the ditch, and being found there by the farm-bailiff on his return from market, was unjustly accused of the vice of intoxication.

"Fault-finders should be free of flaws," Thomasina would say with a prim chin. She *had* seen the farm-bailiff himself "the worse" for more than his supper beer.

But there was one history which Thomasina was always loath to relate, and it was that which both John Broom and the cowherd especially preferred—the history of Lob Lie-by-the-fire.

Thomasina had a feeling (which was shared by Annie the lass) that it was better not to talk of "anything" peculiar to the house in which you were living. One's neighbors' ghosts and bogles are another matter.

But to John Broom and the cowherd no subject was so interesting as that of the Lubber-fiend. The cowherd sighed to think of the good old times when a man might sleep on in spite of cocks, and the stables be cleaner, and the beasts better tended than if he had been up with the lark. And John Broom's curiosity was never quenched about the rough, hairy Good-fellow who worked at night that others might be idle by day, and who was sometimes caught at his hard-earned nap, lying, "like a great

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hurgin bear," where the boy loved to lie himself, before the fire, on this very hearth.

Why and where he had gone, Thomasina could not tell. She had heard that he had originally come from some other household, where he had been offended. But whether he had gone elsewhere when he forsook Lingborough, or whether "such things had left the country" for good, she did not pretend to say.

And when she had told, for the third or fourth time, how his porridge was put into a corner of the cowhouse for him overnight, and how he had been often overheard at his work, but rarely seen, and then only lying before the fire, Miss Betty would ring for prayers, and Thomasina would fold up her knitting and lead the way, followed by Annie the lass, whose nerves John Broom would startle by treading on her heels, the rear being brought up by the cowherd, looking hopelessly at his boots.

THE FARM-BAILIFF—PRETTY COCKY—IN THE WILLOW TREE

Miss Betty and Miss Kitty did really deny themselves the indulgence of being indulgent, and treated John Broom on principles, and for his good. But they did so in their own tremulous and spasmodic way, and got little credit for it. Thomasina, on the other hand, spoiled him with such a masterful, managing air, and so much sensible talk, that no one would have thought that the only system she followed was to conceal his misdemeanors, and to stand between him and the just wrath of the farm-bailiff.

The farm-bailiff, or grieve, as he liked to call himself, was a Scotchman, with a hard-featured face (which he washed on the Sabbath), a harsh voice, a good heart rather deeper down in his body than is usual, and a shrewd, money-getting head, with a speckled straw hat on the top of it. No one could venture to

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imagine when that hat was new, or how long ago it was that the farm-bailiff went to the expense of purchasing those work-day clothes. But the dirt on his face and neck was an orderly accumulation, such as gathers on walls, oil-paintings, and other places to which soap is not habitually applied; it was not a matter of spills and splashes, like the dirt John Broom disgraced himself with. And his clothes, if old, fitted neatly about him; they never suggested raggedness, which was the normal condition of the tramp-boy's jackets. They only looked as if he had been born (and occasionally buried) in them. It is needful to make this distinction, that the good man may not be accused of inconsistency in the peculiar vexation which John Broom's disorderly appearance caused him.

In truth, Miss Betty's *protégé* had reached the age at which he was to "eat dreadfully, wear out his clothes, and be useful on the farm;" and the last condition was quite unfulfilled. At eleven years old he could not be trusted to scare birds, and at half that age the farm-bailiff's eldest child could drive cattle.

"And no' just ruin the leddies in new coats and compliments, either, like some ne'er-do-weels," added the farm-bailiff, who had heard with a jealous ear of sixpences given by Miss Betty and Miss Kitty to their wasteful favorite.

When the eleventh anniversary of John Broom's discovery was passed, and his character at school gave no hopes of his ever qualifying himself to serve the lawyer, it was resolved that—"idleness being the mother of mischief," he should be put under the care of the farm-bailiff, to do such odd jobs about the place as might be suited to his capacity and love of out-door life. And now John Broom's troubles began. By fair means or foul, with here an hour's weeding and there a day's bird scaring, and with errands perpetual, the farm-bailiff contrived to "get some work

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out of" the idle little urchin. His speckled hat and grim face seemed to be everywhere, and always to pop up when John Broom began to play.

They lived "at daggers drawn." I am sorry to say that John Broom's fitful industry was still kept for his own fancies. To climb trees, to run races with the sheep dog, to cut grotesque sticks, gather hedge fruits, explore a bog, or make new friends among beasts and birds—at such matters he would labor with feverish zeal. But so far from trying to cure himself of his indolence about daily drudgery, he found a new and pleasant excitement in thwarting the farm-bailiff at every turn.

It would not sound dignified to say that the farm-bailiff took pleasure in thwarting John Broom. But he certainly did not show his satisfaction when the boy did do his work properly. Perhaps he thought that praise is not good for young people; and the child did not often give him the chance of trying. Of blame he was free enough. Not a good scolding to clear the air, such as Thomasina would give to Annie the lass, but his slow, caustic tongue was always growling, like muttered thunder, over John Broom's incorrigible head.

He had never approved of the tramp-child, who had the overwhelming drawbacks of having no pedigree and of being a bad bargain as to expense. This was not altogether John Broom's fault, but with his personal failings the farm-bailiff had even less sympathy. It had been hinted that he was born in the speckled hat, and whether this were so or not, he certainly had worn an old head whilst his shoulders were still young, and could not remember the time when he wished to waste his energies on anything that did not earn or at least save something.

Once only did anything like approval of the lad escape his lips.

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Miss Betty's uncle's second cousin had returned from foreign lands with a good fortune and several white cockatoos. He kept the fortune himself, but he gave the cockatoos to his friends, and he sent one of them to the little ladies of Lingborough.

He was a lovely creature (the cockatoo, not the cousin, who was plain), and John Broom's admiration of him was boundless. He gazed at the sulphur-colored crest, the pure white wings with their deeper-tinted lining, and even the beak and the fierce round eyes, as he had gazed at the broom bush in his babyhood, with insatiable delight.

The cousin did things handsomely. He had had a ring put round one of the cockatoo's ankles, with a bright steel chain attached and a fastener to secure it to the perch. The cockatoo was sent in the cage by coach, and a perch, made of foreign wood, followed by the carrier.

Miss Betty and Miss Kitty were delighted both with the cockatoo and the perch, but they were a good deal troubled as to how to fasten the two together. There was a neat little ring on the perch, and the cockatoo's chain was quite complete, and he evidently wanted to get out, for he shook the walls of his cage in his gambols. But he put up his crest and snapped when anyone approached, in a manner so alarming that Annie the lass shut herself up in the dairy, and the farm-bailiff turned his speckled hat in his hands, and gave cautious counsel from a safe distance.

"How he flaps!" cried Miss Betty. "I'm afraid he has a very vicious temper."

"He only wants to get out, Miss Betty," said John Broom. "He'd be all right with his perch, and I think I can get him on it."

"Now Heaven save us from the sin o' presumption!" cried the farm-bailiff, and, putting on the speckled hat, he added,

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slowly: "I'm thinking, John Broom, that if ye're engaged wi' the leddies this morning it'll be time I turned my hand to singling these few turnips ye've been thinking about the week past."

On which he departed, and John Broom pressed the little ladies to leave him alone with the bird.

"We shouldn't like to leave you alone with a wild creature like that," said Miss Betty.

"He's just frightened on ye, Miss Betty. He'll be like a lamb when you're gone," urged John Broom.

"Besides, we should like to see you do it," said Miss Kitty.

"You can look in through the window, miss. I must fasten the door, or he'll be out."

"I should never forgive myself if he hurt you, John," said Miss Betty, irresolutely, for she was very anxious to have the cockatoo and perch in full glory in the parlor.

"He'll none hurt me, miss," said John, with a cheerful smile on his rosy face. "I likes him, and he'll like me."

This settled the matter. John was left with the cockatoo. He locked the door, and the little ladies went into the garden and peeped through the window.

They saw John Broom approach the cage, on which the cockatoo put up his crest, opened his beak slowly, and snarled, and Miss Betty tapped on the window and shook her black satin work-bag.

"Don't go near him!" she cried. But John Broom paid no attention.

"What are you putting up that top-knot of yours at me for?" said he to the cockatoo. "Don't ye know your own friends? I'm going to let ye out, I am. You're going on to your perch, you are."

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"Eh, but you're a bonny creature!" he added, as the cockatoo filled the cage with snow and sulphur flutterings.

"Keep away, keep away!" screamed the little ladies, playing a duet on the windowpanes.

"Out with you!" said John Broom, as he unfastened the cage door.

And just when Miss Betty had run round, and as she shouted through the keyhole, "Open the door, John Broom. We've changed our minds. We've decided to keep it in its cage," the cockatoo strode solemnly forth on his eight long toes.

"Pretty Cocky!" said he.

When Miss Betty got back to the window, John Broom had just made an injudicious grab at the steel chain, on which Pretty Cocky flew fiercely at him, and John, burying his face in his arms, received the attack on his thick poll, laughing into his sleeves and holding fast to the chain, whilst the cockatoo and the little ladies screamed against each other.

"It'll break your leg—you'll tear its eyes out!" cried Miss Kitty.

"Miss Kitty means that you'll break its leg, and it will tear your eyes out," Miss Betty explained through the glass. "John Broom! Come away! Lock it in! Let it go!"

But Cocky was now waddling solemnly round the room, and John Broom was creeping after him, with the end of the chain in one hand, and the perch in the other, and in a moment more he had joined the chain and the ring, and just as Miss Betty was about to send for the constable and have the door broken open, Cocky—driven into a corner—clutched his perch, and was raised triumphantly to his place in the bow-window.

He was now a parlor pet, and John Broom saw little of him. This vexed him, for he had taken a passionate liking for the

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bird. The little ladies rewarded him well for his skill, but this brought him no favor from the farm-bailiff, and matters went on as ill as before.

One day the cockatoo got his chain entangled, and Miss Kitty promptly advanced to put it right. She had unfastened that end which secured it to the perch, when Cocky, who had been watching the proceeding with much interest, dabbed at her with his beak. Miss Kitty fled, but, with great presence of mind, shut the door after her. She forgot, however, that the window was open, in front of which stood the cockatoo scanning the summer sky with his fierce eyes, and flapping himself in the breeze.

And just as the little ladies ran into the garden, and Miss Kitty was saying, "One comfort is, sister Betty, that it's quite safe in the room, till we can think what to do next," he bowed his yellow crest, spread his noble wings, and sailed out into the æther.

In ten minutes the whole able-bodied population of the place was in the grounds of Lingborough, including the farm-bailiff.

The cockatoo was on the top of a fir-tree, and a fragment of the chain was with him, for he had broken it, and below on the lawn stood the little ladies, who, with the unfailing courage of women in a hopeless cause, were trying to dislodge him by waving their pocket-handkerchiefs and crying "sh!"

He looked composedly down out of one eye for some time, and then he began to move.

"I think it's coming down now," said Miss Kitty.

But in a quarter of a minute, Cocky had sailed a quarter of a mile, and was rocking himself on the top of an old willow-tree. And at this moment John Broom joined the crowd which followed him.

"I'm thinking he's got his chain fast," said the farm-bailiff;

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"if onybody that understood the beastie daured to get near him——"

"I'll get him," said John Broom, casting down his hat.

"Ye'll get your neck thrawed," said the farm-bailiff.

"We won't hear of it," said the little ladies.

But, to their horror, John Broom kicked off his shoes, after which he spat upon his hands (a shock which Miss Kitty thought she never could have survived), and away he went up the willow.

It was not an easy tree to climb, and he had one or two narrow escapes, which kept the crowd breathless, but he shook the hair from his eyes, moistened his hands afresh, and went on. The farm-bailiff's far-away heart was stirred. No Scotchman is insensible to gallantry. And courage is the only thing a "canny" Scot can bear to see expended without return.

"John Broom," screamed Miss Betty, "come down! I order, I command you to come down."

The farm-bailiff drew his speckled hat forward to shade his upward gaze, and folded his arms.

"Dinna call on him, leddies," he said, speaking more quickly than usual. "Dinna mak' him turn his head. Steady, lad! Grip wi' your feet. Spit on your pawms, man."

Once the boy trod on a rotten branch, and as he drew back his foot, and it came crashing down, the farm-bailiff set his teeth, and Miss Kitty fainted in Thomasina's arms.

"I'll reward anyone who'll fetch him down," sobbed Miss Betty. But John Broom seated himself on the same branch as the cockatoo, and undid the chain and prepared his hands for the downward journey.

"You've got a rare perch, this time," said he. And Pretty Cocky crept towards him, and rubbed its head against him and chuckled with joy.

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What dreams of liberty in the treetops, with John Broom for a playfellow, passed through his crested head, who shall say? But when he found that his friend meant to take him prisoner, he became very angry and much alarmed. And when John Broom grasped him by both legs and began to descend, Cocky pecked him vigorously. But the boy held the back of his head towards him, and went steadily down.

"Weel done!" roared the farm-bailiff. "Gently, lad! Gude save us! ha'e a care o' yoursen. That's weel. Keep your pow to him. Dinna let the beast get at your een."

But when John Broom was so near the ground as to be safe, the farm-bailiff turned wrathfully upon his son, who had been gazing open-mouthed at the sight which had so interested his father.

"Ye look weel standing gawping here, before the leddies," said he, "wasting the precious hours, and bringing your father's gray hairs wi' sorrow to the grave; and John Broom yonder shamming ye, and you not so much as thinking to fetch the perch for him, ye lazy loon. Away wi' ye and get it, before I lay a stick about your shoulders."

And when his son had gone for the perch, and John Broom was safely on the ground, laughing, bleeding, and triumphant, the farm-bailiff said,—

"Ye're a bauld chiel, John Broom, I'll say that for ye."

INTO THE MIST

Unfortunately the favorable impression produced by "the gypsy lad's" daring soon passed from the farm-bailiff's mind. It was partly effaced by the old jealousy of the little ladies' favor. Miss Betty gave the boy no less than four silver shillings, and

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he ungraciously refused to let the farm-bailiff place them in a savings bank for him.

Matters got from bad to worse. The farming man was not the only one who was jealous, and John Broom himself was as idle and reckless as ever. Though, if he had listened respectfully to the Scotchman's counsels, or shown any disposition to look up to and be guided by him, much might have been overlooked. But he made fun of him and made a friend of the cowherd. And this latter most manifest token of low breeding vexed the respectable taste of the farm-bailiff.

John Broom had his own grievances, too, and he brooded over them. He thought the little ladies had given him over to the farm-bailiff, because they had ceased to care for him, and that the farm-bailiff was prejudiced against him beyond any hope of propitiation. The village folk taunted him, too, with being an out-cast, and called him Gypsy John, and this maddened him. Then he would creep into the cow-house and lie in the straw against the white cow's warm back, and for a few of Miss Betty's coppers, to spend in beer or tobacco, the cowherd would hide him from the farm-bailiff and tell him countryside tales. To Thomasina's stories of ghosts and gossip, he would add strange tales of smugglers on the near-lying coast, and as John Broom listened, his restless blood rebelled more and more against the sour sneers and dry drudgery that he got from the farm-bailiff.

Nor were sneers the sharpest punishment his misdemeanors earned. The farm-bailiff's stick was thick and his arm was strong, and he had a tendency to believe that if a flogging was good for a boy, the more he had of it the better it would be for him.

And John Broom, who never let a cry escape him at the time,

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would steal away afterwards and sob out his grief into the long, soft coat of the sympathizing sheep dog.

Unfortunately he never tried the effect of deserving better treatment as a remedy for his woes. The parson's good advice and Miss Betty's entreaties were alike in vain. He was ungrateful even to Thomasina. The little ladies sighed and thought of the lawyer. And the parson preached patience.

"Cocky has been tamed," said Miss Kitty, thoughtfully, "perhaps John Broom will get steadier by-and-by."

"It seems a pity we can't chain him to a perch, Miss Kitty," laughed the parson; "he would be safe then, at any rate."

Miss Betty said afterwards that it did seem so remarkable that the parson should have made this particular joke on this particular night—the night when John Broom did not come home.

He had played truant all day. The farm-bailiff had wanted him, and he had kept out of the way.

The wind was from the east, and a white mist rolled in from the sea, bringing a strange, invigorating smell, and making your lips clammy with salt. It made John Broom's heart beat faster, and filled his head with dreams of ships and smugglers, and rocking masts higher than the willow-tree, and winds wilder than this wind, and dancing waves.

Then something loomed through the fog. It was the farm-bailiff's speckled hat. John Broom hesitated—the thick stick became visible.

Then a cloud rolled between them, and the child turned, and ran, and ran, and ran, coastwards, into the sea mist.

THE SEA—THE ONE-EYED SAILOR—THE OTHER SIDE OF THE WORLD

John Broom was footsore when he reached the coast, but that

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keen, life-giving smell had drawn him on and held him up. The fog had cleared off, and he strained his black eyes through the darkness to see the sea.

He had never seen it—that other world within this, on which one lived out of doors, and climbed about all day, and no one blamed him.

When he did see it, he thought he had got to the end of the world. If the edge of the cliff were not the end, he could not make out where the sky began; and if that darkness were the sea, the sea was full of stars.

But this was because the sea was quiet and reflected the color of the night sky, and the stars were the lights of the herring-boats twinkling in the bay.

When he got down by the water he saw the vessels lying alongside, and they were dirtier than he had supposed. But he did not lose heart, and remembering, from the cowherd's tales, that people who cannot pay for their passage must either work it out or hide themselves on board ship, he took the easier alternative, and got on to the first vessel which had a plank to the quay, and hid himself under some tarpaulin on the deck.

The vessel was a collier bound for London, and she sailed with the morning tide.

When he was found out he was not ill-treated. Indeed, the rough skipper offered to take him home again on his return voyage. He would have liked to go, but pride withheld him, and homesickness had not yet eaten into his very soul. Then an old sailor with one eye (but that a sly one) met him, and told him tales more wonderful than the cowherd's. And with him he shipped as cabin-boy, on a vessel bound for the other side of the world.

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A great many sins bring their own punishment in this life pretty clearly, and sometimes pretty closely; but few more directly or more bitterly than rebellion against the duties, and ingratitude for the blessings, of home.

There was no playing truant on board ship; and as to the master poor John Broom served now, his cruelty made the memory of the farm-bailiff a memory of tenderness and gentleness and indulgence. Till he was half-naked and half-starved, and had only short snatches of sleep in hard corners, it had never struck him that when one has got good food and clothes, and sound sleep in a kindly home, he has got more than many people, and enough to be thankful for.

He did everything he was told now as fast as he could do it, in fear for his life. The one-eyed sailor had told him that the captain always took orphans and poor friendless lads to be his cabin-boys, and John Broom thought what a nice kind man he must be, and how different from the farm-bailiff, who thought nobody could be trustworthy unless he could show parents and grand-parents, and cousins to the sixth degree. But after they had sailed, when John Broom felt very ill, and asked the one-eyed sailor where he was to sleep, the one-eyed sailor pleasantly replied that if he hadn't brought a four-post bed in his pocket he must sleep where he could, for that all the other cabin-boys were sleeping in Davy's Locker, and couldn't be disturbed. And it was not till John Broom had learned ship's language that he found out that Davy's Locker meant the deep, and that the other cabin-boys were dead. "And as they'd nobody belonging to 'em, no hearts was broke," added the sailor, winking with his one eye.

John Broom slept standing sometimes for weariness, but he did not sleep in Davy's Locker. Young as he was he had dauntless courage, a careless, hopeful heart, and a tough little body;



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"I LIKES HIM, AND HE'LL LIKE ME."

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and that strong, life-giving sea smell bore him up instead of food, and he got to the other side of the world.

Why he did not stay there, why he did not run away into the wilderness to find at least some easier death than to have his bones broken by the cruel captain, he often wondered afterwards. He was so much quicker and braver than the boys they commonly got, that the old sailor kept a sharp watch over him with his one eye whilst they were ashore; but one day he was too drunk to see out of it, and John Broom ran away.

It was Christmas Day, and so hot that he could not run far, for it was at the other side of the world, where things are upside down, and he sat down by the roadside on the outskirts of the city; and as he sat, with his thin, brown face resting on his hands, a familiar voice beside him said, "Pretty Cocky!" and looking up he saw a man with several cages of birds. The speaker was a cockatoo of the most exquisite shades of cream-color, salmon, and rose, and he had a rose-colored crest. But lovely as he was, John Broom's eyes were on another cage, where, silent, solemn, and sulky, sat a big white one with sulphur-colored trimmings and fierce black eyes; and he was so like Miss Betty's pet, that the poor child's heart bounded as if a hand had been held out to him from home.

"If you let him get at you, you'll not do it a second time, mate," said the man. "He's the nastiest-tempered beast I ever saw. I'd have wrung his neck long ago if he hadn't such a fine coat."

But John Broom said, as he had said before, "I likes him, and he'll like me."

When the cockatoo bit his finger to the bone, the man roared with laughter, but John Broom did not draw his hand away. He kept it still at the bird's beak, and with the other he gently

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scratched him under the crest and wings. And when the white cockatoo began to stretch out his eight long toes, as cats clutch with their claws from pleasure, and chuckled, and sighed, and bit softly without hurting, and laid his head against the bars till his snow and sulphur feathers touched John Broom's black locks, the man was amazed.

"Look here, mate," said he, "you've the trick with birds, and no mistake. I'll sell this one cheap, and you'll be able to sell him dear."

"I've not a penny in the world," said John Broom.

"You do look cleaned out, too," said the man, scanning him from head to foot. "I tell you what, you shall come with me a bit and tame the birds, and I'll find you something to eat."

Ten minutes before, John Broom would have jumped at this offer, but now he refused it. The sight of the cockatoo had brought back the fever of homesickness in all its fierceness. He couldn't stay out here. He would dare anything, do anything, to see the hills about Lingborough once more before he died; and even if he did not live to see them, he might live to sleep in that part of Davy's Locker which should rock him on the shores of home.

The man gave him a shilling for fastening a ring and chain on to the cocky's ankle, and with this he got the best dinner he had eaten since he lost sight of the farm-bailiff's speckled hat in the mist.

And then he went back to the one-eyed sailor, and shipped as cabin-boy again for the homeward voyage.

THE HIGHLANDER—BARRACK LIFE—THE GREAT CURSE—
JOHN BROOM'S MONEY-BOX

When John Broom did get home he did not go to sea again.

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He lived from hand to mouth in the seaport town, and slept, as he was well accustomed to sleep, in holes and corners.

Every day and every night, through the long months of the voyage, he had dreamed of begging his way barefoot to Miss Betty's door. But now he did not go. His life was hard, but it was not cruel. He was very idle, and there was plenty to see. He wandered about the country as of old. The ships and shipping, too, had a fascination for him now that the past was past, and here he could watch them from the shore; and, partly for shame and partly for pride, he could not face the idea of going back. If he had been taunted with being a vagrant boy before, what would be said now if he presented himself, a true tramp, to the farm-bailiff? Besides, Miss Betty and Miss Kitty could not forgive him. It was impossible!

He was wandering about one day when he came to some fine high walls with buildings inside. There was an open gateway, at which stood a soldier with a musket. But a woman and some children went in, and he did not shoot them; so when his back was turned, and he was walking stiffly to where he came from, John Broom ran in through the gateway.

The first man he saw was the grandest-looking man he had ever seen. Indeed, he looked more like a bird than a man—a big bird with a big black crest. He was very tall. His feet were broad and white, like the feathered feet of some plummy bird, his legs were bare and brown and hairy. He was clothed in many colors. He had fur in front, which swung as he walked, and silver and shining stones about him. He held his head very high, and from it drooped great black plumes. His face looked as if it had been cut—roughly but artistically—out of a block of old wood, and his eyes were the color of a summer sky. And John Broom felt as he had felt when he first saw Miss Betty's cockatoo.

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In repose the Highlander's eye was as clear as a cairngorm and as cold, but when it fell upon John Broom it took a twinkle not quite unlike the twinkle in the one eye of the sailor; and then, to his amazement, this grand creature beckoned to John Broom with a rather dirty hand.

"Yes, sir," said John Broom, staring up at the splendid giant, with eyes of wonder.

"I'm saying," said the Highlander, confidentially (and it had a pleasant homely sound to hear him speak like the farm-bailiff) — "I'm saying, I'm confined to barracks, ye ken; and I'll gi'e ye a haw-penny if ye'll get the bottle filled wi' whusky. Roun' yon corner ye'll see the 'Britain's Defenders.' "

But at this moment he erected himself, his turquoise eyes looked straight before them, and he put his hand to his head and moved it slowly away again, as a young man with more swinging grandeur of colors and fur and plumes, and with greater glittering of gems and silver, passed by, a sword clattering after him.

Meanwhile John Broom had been round the corner and was back again.

"What for are ye stannin' there, ye fule?" asked his new friend. "What for didna ye gang for the whusky?"

"It's here, sir."

"My certy, ye dinna let the grass grow under your feet," said the Highlander; and he added, "If ye want to run errands, laddie, ye can come back again."

It was the beginning of a fresh life for John Broom. With many other idle or homeless boys he now haunted the barracks, and ran errands for the soldiers. His fleetness of foot and ready wit made him the favorite. Perhaps, too, his youth and his bright face and eyes pleaded for him, for British soldiers are a tender-hearted race.

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He was knocked about, but never cruelly, and he got plenty of coppers and broken victuals, and now and then an old cap or pair of boots, a world too large for him. His principal errands were to fetch liquor for the soldiers. In arms and pockets he would sometimes carry a dozen bottles at once, and fly back from the canteen or public-house without breaking one.

Before the summer was over he was familiar with every barrack-room and guard-room in the place; he had food to eat and coppers to spare, and he shared his bits with the mongrel dogs who lived, as he did, on the good-nature of the garrison.

It must be confessed that neatness was not among John Broom's virtues. He looped his rags together with bits of string, and wasted his pence or lost them. The soldiers standing at the bar would often give him a drink out of their pewter-pots. It choked him at first, and then he got used to it, and liked it. Some relics of Miss Betty's teaching kept him honest. He would not condescend to sip by the way out of the soldiers' jugs and bottles as other errand-boys did, but he came to feel rather proud of laying his twopence on the counter, and emptying his own pot of beer with a grimace to the bystanders through the glass at the bottom.

One day he was winking through the froth of a pint of porter at the canteen sergeant's daughter, who was in fits of laughing, when the pewter was knocked out of his grasp, and the big Highlander's hand was laid on his shoulder and bore him twenty or thirty yards from the place in one swoop.

"I'll trouble ye to give me your attention," said the Highlander, when they came to a standstill, "and to speak the truth. Did ye ever see me the worse of liquor?"

John Broom had several remembrances of the clearest kind

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to that effect, so he put up his arms to shield his head from the probable blow, and said, "Yes, M'Alister."

"How often?" asked the Scotchman.

"I never counted," said John Broom; "pretty often."

"How many good-conduct stripes do ye ken me to have lost of your ain knowledge?"

"Three, M'Alister."

"Is there a finer man than me in the regiment?" asked the Highlander, drawing up his head.

"That there's not," said John Broom, warmly.

"Our sairgent, now," drawled the Scotchman, "wad ye say he was a better man than me?"

"Nothing like so good," said John Broom, sincerely.

"And what d'ye suppose, man," said the Highlander, firing with sudden passion, till the light of his clear blue eyes seemed to pierce John Broom's very soul—"what d'ye suppose has hindered me that I'm not sairgent, when yon man is? What has keepit me from being an officer, that had served my country in twa battles when oor quartermaster hadn't enlisted? Wha gets my money? What lost me my stripes? What loses me decent folks' respect and, waur than that, my ain? What gars a hand that can grip a broadsword tremble like a woman's? What fills the canteen and the kirkyard? What robs a man of health and wealth and peace? What ruins weans and women, and makes mair homes desolate than war? Drink, man, drink! The deevil of drink!"

It was not till the glare in his eyes had paled that John Broom ventured to speak. Then he said,—

"Why don't ye give it up, M'Alister?"

The man rose to his full height, and laid his hand heavily on the boy's shoulder, and his eyes seemed to fade with that pitiful,

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weary look, which only such blue eyes show so well. "Because I canna," said he; "because, for as big as I am, I canna. But for as little as you are, laddie, ye can, and, Heaven help me, ye shall."

That evening he called John Broom into the barrack-room where he slept. He was sitting on the edge of his bed, and had a little wooden money-box in his hands.

"What money have ye, laddie?" he asked.

John Broom pulled out three halfpence lately earned, and the Scotchman dropped them slowly into the box. Then he turned the key, and put it into his pocket, and gave the box to the boy.

"Ye'll put what ye earn in there," said he, "I'll keep the key, and ye'll keep the box yoursel; and when it's opened we'll open it together, and lay out your savings in decent clothes for ye against the winter."

At this moment some men passing to the canteen shouted, "M'Alistair!" The Highlander did not answer, but he started to the door. Then he stood irresolute, and then turned and reseated himself.

"Gang and bring me a bit o' tobacco," he said, giving John Broom a penny. And when the boy had gone he emptied his pocket of the few pence left, and dropped them into the box, muttering, "If he manna, I wunna."

And when the tobacco came, he lit his pipe, and sat on the bench outside, and snarled at everyone who spoke to him.

OUTPOST DUTY—THE SERGEANT'S STORY—GRAND ROUNDS

It was a bitterly cold winter. The soldiers drank a great deal, and John Broom was constantly trotting up and down, and the

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box grew very heavy. Bottles were filled and refilled, in spite of greatly increased strictness in the discipline of the garrison, for there were rumors of invasion, and penalties were heavy, and sentry posts were increased, and the regiments were kept in readiness for action.

The Highlander had not cured himself of drinking, though he had cured John Broom. But, like others, he was more wary just now, and had hitherto escaped the heavy punishments inflicted in a time of probable war; and John Broom watched over him with the fidelity of a sheep dog, and more than once had roused him with a can of cold water when he was all but caught by his superiors in a state of stupor, which would not have been credited to the frost alone.

The talk of invasion had become grave, when one day a body of men were ordered for outpost duty, and M'Alister was among them. The officer had got a room for them in a farmhouse, where they sat round the fire, and went out by turns to act as sentries at various posts for an hour or two at a time.

The novelty was delightful to John Broom. He hung about the farmhouse, and warmed himself at the soldiers' fire.

In the course of the day M'Alister got him apart, and whispered, "I'm going on duty the night at ten, laddie. It's fearsome cold, and I hav'na had a drop to warm me the day. If ye could ha' brought me a wee drappie to the corner of the three roads—it's twa miles from here I'm thinking——"

"It's not the miles, M'Alister," said John Broom, "but you're on outpost duty, and——"

"And you're misdoubting what may be done to ye for bringing liquor to a sentry on duty? Aye, aye, lad, ye do weel to be cautious," said the Highlander, and he turned away.

But it was not the fear of consequences to himself which had

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made John Broom hesitate, and he was stung by the implication.

The night was dark and very cold, and the Highlander had been pacing up and down his post for about half-an-hour, when his quick ear caught a faint sound of footsteps.

"Wha goes there?" said he.

"It's I, M'Alister," whispered John Broom.

"Whisht, laddie," said the sentry; "are ye there after all? Did no one see ye?"

"Not a soul; I crept by the hedges. Here's your whisky, M'Alister; but, oh, be careful!" said the lad.

The Scotchman's eyes glittered greedily at the bottle.

"Never fear," said he, "I'll just rub a wee drappie on the pawms of my hands to keep away the frost-bite, for it's awsome cold, man. Now away wi' ye, and take tent, laddie, keep off the other sentries."

John Broom went back as carefully as he had come, and slipped in to warm himself by the guard-room fire.

It was a good one, and the soldiers sat close round it. The officer was writing a letter in another room, and in a low, impressive voice, the sergeant was telling a story which was listened to with breathless attention. John Broom was fond of stories, and he listened also.

It was of a friend of the sergeant's, who had been a boy with him in the same village at home, who had seen active service with him abroad, and who had slept at his post on such a night as this, from the joint effects of cold and drink. It was war time, and he had been tried by court-martial, and shot for the offence. The sergeant had been one of the firing party to execute his friend, and they had taken leave of each other as brothers, before the final parting face to face in this last awful scene.

The man's voice was faltering, when the tale was cut short

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by the jingling of the field officer's accoutrements as he rode by to visit the outposts. In an instant the officer and men turned out to receive him; and, after the usual formalities, he rode on. The officer went back to his letter, and the sergeant and his men to their fireside.

The opening of the doors had let in a fresh volume of cold, and one of the men called to John Broom to mend the fire. But he was gone.

John Broom was fleet of foot, and there are certain moments which lift men beyond their natural powers, but he had set himself a hard task.

As he listened to the sergeant's tale, an agonizing fear smote him for his friend M'Alister. Was there any hope that the Highlander could keep himself from the whisky? Officers were making their rounds at very short intervals just now, and if drink and cold overcame him at his post!

Close upon these thoughts came the jingling of the field officer's sword, and the turn out of the guard. "Who goes there?" — "Rounds." — "What rounds?" — "Grand rounds." — "Halt, grand rounds, advance one, and give the countersign!" The familiar words struck coldly on John Broom's heart, as if they had been orders to a firing party, and the bandage were already across the Highlander's blue eyes. Would the grand rounds be challenged at the three roads to-night? He darted out into the snow.

He flew, as the crow flies, across the fields, to where M'Alister was on duty. It was a much shorter distance than by the road, which was winding; but whether this would balance the difference between a horse's pace and his own was the question, and there being no time to question, he ran on.

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He kept his black head down, and ran from his shoulders. The clatter, clatter, jingle, jingle, on the hard road came to him through the still frost, on a level with his left ear. It was terrible, but he held on, dodging under the hedges to be out of sight, and the sound lessened, and by-and-by, the road having wound about, he could hear it faintly, *but behind him*.

And he reached the three roads, and M'Alister was asleep in the ditch.

But when, with jingle and clatter, the field officer of the day reached the spot, the giant Highlander stood like a watch-tower at his post, with a little snow on the black plumes that drooped upon his shoulders.

HOSPITAL—"HAME"

John Broom did not see the Highlander again for two or three days. It was Christmas week, and, in spite of the war panic, there was festivity enough in the barracks to keep the errand-boy very busy.

Then came New Year's Eve—"Hogmenay," as the Scotch call it—and it was the Highland regiment's particular festival. Worn-out with whisky-fetching and with helping to deck barrack-rooms and carrying pots and trestles, John Broom was having a nap in the evening, in company with a mongrel deerhound, when a man shook him, and said, "I heard someone asking for ye an hour or two back; M'Alister wants ye."

"Where is he?" said John Broom, jumping to his feet.

"In hospital; he's been there a day or two. He got cold on outpost duty, and it's flown to his lungs, they say. Ye see he's been a hard drinker, has M'Alister, and I expect he's breaking up."

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With which very just conclusion the speaker went on into the canteen, and John Broom ran to the hospital.

Stripped of his picturesque trappings, and with no plumes to shadow the hollows in his temples, M'Alister looked gaunt and feeble enough, as he lay in the little hospital bed, which barely held his long limbs. Such a wreck of giant powers of body and noble qualities of mind as the drink-shops are preparing for the hospitals every day!

Since the quickly-reached medical decision that he was in a rapid decline, and that nothing could be done for him, M'Alister had been left a good deal alone. His intellect (and it was no fool's intellect) was quite clear, and if the long hours by himself, in which he reckoned with his own soul, had hastened the death-damps on his brow, they had also written there an expression which was new to John Broom. It was not the old sour look, it was a kind of noble gravity.

His light-blue eyes brightened as the boy came in, and he held out his hand, and John Broom took it with both his, saying:

"I never heard till this minute, M'Alister. Eh, I do hope you'll be better soon."

"The Lord being merciful to me," said the Highlander. "But *this* world's nearly past, laddie, and I was fain to see ye again. Dinna greet, man, for I've important business wi' ye, and I should wish your attention. Firstly, I'm aboot to hand over to ye the key of your box. Tak' it, and put it in a pocket that's no got a hole in it, if you're worth one. Secondly, there's a bit bag I made mysel', and it's got a trifle o' money in it that I'm giving and bequeathing to ye, under certain conditions, namely, that ye shall spend the contents of the box according to my last wishes and instructions, with the ultimate end of your ain benefit, ye'll understand."

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A fit of coughing here broke M'Alister's discourse; but, after drinking from a cup beside him, he put aside John Broom's remonstrances with a dignified movement of his hand, and continued,—

"When a body comes of decent folk, he won't just care, maybe, to have their names brought up in a barrack-room. Ye never heard me say ought of my father or my mither?"

"Never, M'Alister."

"I'd a good hame," said the Highlander, with a decent pride in his tone. "It was a strict hame—I've no cause now to deceive mysel', and I'm thinking it was a wee bit ower strict—but it was a good hame. I left it, man—I ran away."

The glittering blue eyes turned sharply on the lad, and he went on:

"A body doesna' care to turn his byganes oot for every fool to peck at. Did I ever speer about your past life, and whar ye came from?"

"Never, M'Alister."

"But that's no to say that, if I knew manners, I didna ob-sairve. And there's been things now and again, John Broom, that's gar'd me think that ye've had what I had, and done as I did. Did ye rin awa', laddie?"

John Broom nodded his black head, but tears choked his voice.

"Man!" said the Highlander, "ane word's as gude's a thousand. Gang back! Gang hame! There's the bit siller here that's to tak' ye, and the love yonder that's awaiting ye. Listen to a dying man, laddie, and gang hame!"

"I doubt if they'd have me," sobbed John Broom, "I gave 'em a deal of trouble, M'Alister."

"And d'ye think, lad, that that thought has na' cursed *me*,

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and keepit me from them that loved me? Aye, lad, and till this week I never overcame it.

"Weel may I want to save ye, bairn," added the Highlander tenderly, "for it was the thocht of a' ye riskit for the like of me at the three roads, that made me consider wi' mysel' that I've aiblins been turning my back a' my wilfu' life on love that's bigger than a man's deservings. It's near done now, and it'll never lie in my poor power so much as rightly to thank ye. It's strange that a man should set store by a good name that he doesna' deserve; but if only blessings of mine could bring ye good, they're yours, that saved an old soldier's honor, and let him die respected in his regiment."

"Oh, M'Alister, let me fetch one of the chaplains to write a letter to fetch your father," cried John Broom.

"The minister's been here this morning," said the Highlander, "and I've tell't him mair than I've tell't you. And he's jest directed me to put my sinful trust in the Father of us a'. I've sinned heaviest against *Him*, laddie, but *His* love is stronger than the lave."

John Broom remained by his friend, whose painful fits of coughing, and of gasping for breath, were varied by intervals of seeming stupor. When a candle had been brought in and placed near the bed, the Highlander roused himself and asked,—

"Is there a Bible on yon table? Could ye read a bit to me, laddie?"

There is little need to dwell on the bitterness of heart with which John Broom confessed,—

"I can't read big words, M'Alister."

"Did ye never go to school?" said the Scotchman.

"I didn't learn," said the poor boy; "I played."

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"Aye, aye. Weel, ye'll learn, when ye gang hame," said the Highlander, in gentle tones.

"I'll never get home," said John Broom, passionately. "I'll never forgive myself. I'll never get over it, that I couldn't read to ye when ye wanted me, M'Alister."

"Gently, gently," said the Scotchman. "Dinna daunt yoursel' owermuch wi' the past, laddie. And for me—I'm not that presoomtious to think I can square up a misspent life as a man might compound wi's creditors. 'Gin He forgi'es me, He'll forgi'e; but it's not a prayer up or a chapter down that'll stan' between me and the Almighty. So dinna fret yoursel', but let me think while I may."

And so, far into the night, the Highlander lay silent, and John Broom watched by him.

It was just midnight when he partly raised himself, and cried,—

"Whisht, laddie! do ye hear the pipes?"

The dying ears must have been quick, for John Broom heard nothing; but in a few moments he heard the bagpipes from the officers' mess, where they were keeping Hogmenay. They were playing the old year out with "Auld lang syne," and the Highlander beat the tune out with his hand, and his eyes gleamed out of his rugged face in the dim light, as cairngorms glitter in dark tartan.

There was a pause after the first verse, and he grew restless, and turning doubtfully to where John Broom sat, as if his sight were failing, he said, "Ye'll mind your promise, ye'll gang hame?" And after awhile he repeated the last word,

"Hame!"

But as he spoke there spread over his face a smile so tender and so full of happiness, that John Broom held his breath as he

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watched him. As the light of sunrise creeps over the face of some rugged rock, it crept from chin to brow, and the pale blue eyes shone tranquil, like water that reflects heaven.

And when it had passed it left them still open, but gems that had lost their ray.

LUCK GOES—AND COMES AGAIN

The spirit does not always falter in its faith because the flesh is weary with hope deferred. When week after week, month after month, and year after year went by and John Broom was not found, the disappointment seemed to "age" the little ladies, as Thomasina phrased it. But yet they said to the parson, "We do not regret it."

"God forbid that you should regret it," said he.

And even the lawyer (whose heart was kinder than his tongue) abstained from taunting them with his prophecies, and said, "The force of the habits of early education is a power as well as that of inherent tendencies. It is only for your sake that I regret a too romantic benevolence." And Miss Betty and Miss Kitty tried to put the matter quite away. But John Broom was very closely bound up with the life of many years past. Thomasina mourned him as if he had been her son, and Thomasina being an old and valuable servant, it is needless to say that when she was miserable no one in the house was permitted to be quite at ease.

As to Pretty Cocky, he lived, but Miss Kitty fancied that he grew less pretty and drooped upon his polished perch.

There were times when the parson felt almost conscience-stricken because he had encouraged the adoption of John Broom. Disappointments fall heavily upon elderly people. They may

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submit better than the young, but they do not so easily revive. The little old ladies looked grayer and more nervous, and the little old house looked grayer and gloomier than of old.

Indeed, there were other causes of anxiety. Times were changing, prices were rising, and the farm did not thrive. The lawyer said that the farm-bailiff neglected his duties, and that the cowherd did nothing but drink; but Miss Betty trembled, and said they could not part with old servants.

The farm-bailiff had his own trouble, but he kept it to himself. No one knew how severely he had beaten John Broom the day before he ran away, but he remembered it himself with painful clearness. Harsh men are apt to have consciences, and his was far from easy about the lad who had been entrusted to his care. He could not help thinking of it when the day's work was over, and he had to keep filling up his evening whisky-glass again and again to drown disagreeable thoughts.

The whisky answered this purpose, but it made him late in the morning; it complicated business on market days, not to the benefit of the farm, and it put him at a disadvantage in dealing with the drunken cowherd.

The cowherd was completely upset by John Broom's mysterious disappearance, and he comforted himself as the farm-bailiff did, but to a larger extent. And Thomasina winked at many irregularities in consideration of the groans of sympathy with which he responded to her tears as they sat round the hearth where John Broom no longer lay.

At the time that he vanished from Lingborough the gossips of the countryside said, "This comes of making pets of tramps' brats, when honest folk's sons may toil and moil without notice." But when it was proved that the tramp-boy had stolen nothing, when all search for him was vain, and when prosperity faded from

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the place season by season and year by year, there were old folk who whispered that the gaudily-clothed child Miss Betty had found under the broom-bush had something more than common in him, and that whoever and whatever had offended the eerie creature, he had taken the luck of Lingborough with him when he went away.

It was early summer. The broom was shining in the hedges with uncommon wealth of golden blossoms. "The lanes look for all the world as they did the year that poor child was found," said Thomasina, wiping her eyes. Annie the lass sobbed hysterically, and the cowherd found himself so low in spirits that after gazing dismally at the cow-stalls, which had not been cleaned for days past, he betook himself to the ale-house to refresh his energies for this and other arrears of work.

On returning to the farm, however, he found his hands still feeble, and he took a drop or two more to steady them, after which it occurred to him that certain new potatoes which he had had orders to dig were yet in the ground. The wood was not chopped for the next day's use, and he wondered what had become of a fork he had had in the morning and had laid down somewhere.

So he seated himself on some straw in the corner to think about it all, and whilst he was thinking he fell fast asleep.

By his own account many remarkable things had befallen him in the course of his life, including that meeting with a Black Something to which allusion has been made, but nothing so strange as what happened to him that night.

When he awoke in the morning and sat up on the straw, and looked around him, the stable was freshly cleaned, the litter in the stalls was shaken and turned, and near the door was an old barrel of newly-dug potatoes, and the fork stood by it. And when he

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ran to the wood-house there lay the wood neatly chopped and piled to take away.

He kept his own counsel that day and took credit for the work, but when on the morrow the farm-bailiff was at a loss to know who had thinned the turnips that were left to do in the upper field, and Annie the lass found the kitchen-cloths she had left overnight to soak, rubbed through and rinsed, and laid to dry, the cowherd told his tale to Thomasina, and begged for a bowl of porridge and cream to set in the barn, as one might set a mouse-trap baited with cheese.

“For,” said he, “the luck of Lingborough’s come back, missis. *It’s Lob Lie-by-the-fire!*”

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“It’s Lob Lie-by-the-fire!”

So Thomasina whispered exultingly, and Annie the lass timidly. Thomasina cautioned the cowherd to hold his tongue, and she said nothing to the little ladies on the subject. She felt certain that they would tell the parson, and he might not approve. The farm-bailiff knew of a farm on the Scotch side of the Border where a brownie had been driven away by the minister preaching his last Sunday’s sermon over again at him, and as Thomasina said, “There’d been little enough luck at Lingborough lately, that they should wish to scare it away when it came.”

And yet the news leaked out gently, and was soon known all through the neighborhood—as a secret.

“The luck of Lingborough’s come back. Lob’s lying by the fire!”

He could be heard at his work any night, and several people had seen him, though this vexed Thomasina, who knew well that the Good People do not like to be watched at their labors.

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The cowherd had not been able to resist peeping down through chinks in the floor of the loft above the barn, where he slept, and one night he had seen Lob fetching straw for the cow-house. "A great rough, black fellow," said he, and he certainly grew bigger and rougher and blacker every time the cowherd told the tale.

The Lubber-fiend appeared next to a boy who was loitering at a late hour somewhere near the little ladies' kitchen-garden, and whom he pursued and pelted with mud till the lad nearly lost his wits with terror. (It was the same boy who was put in the lock-up in the autumn for stealing Farmer Mangel's Siberian crabs.)

For this trick, however, the rough elf atoned by leaving three pecks of newly-gathered fruit in the kitchen the following morning. Never had there been such a preserving season at Lingborough within the memory of Thomasina.

The truth is, hobgoblins, from Puck to Will-o'-the-wisp, are apt to play practical jokes and knock people about whom they meet after sunset. A dozen tales of such were rife, and folk were more amused than amazed by Lob Lie-by-the-fire's next prank.

There was an aged pauper who lived on the charity of the little ladies, and whom it was Miss Betty's practice to employ to do light weeding in the fields for heavy wages. This venerable person was toddling to his home in the gloaming with a barrow-load of Miss Betty's new potatoes, dexterously hidden by an upper sprinkling of groundsel and hemlock, when the Lubber-fiend sprang out from behind an elder-bush, ran at the old man with his black head, and knocked him, heels uppermost, into the ditch. The wheelbarrow was afterwards found in Miss Betty's farmyard, quite empty.

And when the cowherd (who had his own opinion of the

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aged pauper, and it was a very poor one) went that evening to drink Lob Lie-by-the-fire's health from a bottle he kept in the harness-room window, he was nearly choked with the contents, which had turned into salt and water, as fairy jewels turn to withered leaves.

But luck had come to Lingborough. There had not been such crops for twice seven years past.

The lay-away hen's eggs were brought regularly to the kitchen.

The ducklings were not eaten by rats.

No fowls were stolen.

The tub of pig-meal lasted three times as long as usual.

The cart-wheels and gate-hinges were oiled by unseen fingers.

The mushrooms in the croft gathered themselves and lay down on a dish in the larder.

It is by small savings that a farm thrives, and Miss Betty's farm throve.

Everybody worked with more alacrity. Annie the lass said the butter came in a way that made it a pleasure to churn.

The neighbors knew even more than those on the spot. They said—That since Lob came back to Lingborough the hens laid eggs as large as turkeys' eggs, and the turkeys' eggs were—oh, you wouldn't believe the size!

That the cows gave nothing but cream, and that Thomasina skimmed butter off it as less lucky folk skim cream from milk.

That her cheeses were as rich as butter.

That she sold all she made, for Lob took the fairy butter from the old trees in the avenue, and made it up into pats for Miss Betty's table.

That if you bought Lingborough turnips, you might feed

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your cows on them all the winter and the milk would be as sweet as new-mown hay.

That horses foddered on Lingborough hay would have thrice the strength of others, and that sheep who cropped Lingborough pastures would grow three times as fat.

That for as good a watch-dog as it was, the sheep-dog never barked at Lob, a plain proof that he was more than human.

That for all its good luck it was not safe to loiter near the place after dark, if you wished to keep your senses. And if you took so much as a fallen apple belonging to Miss Betty, you might look out for palsy or St. Vitus's dance, or to be carried off bodily to the underground folk.

Finally, that it was well that all the cows gave double, for that Lob Lie-by-the-fire drank two gallons of the best cream every day, with curds, porridge, and other dainties to match. But what did that matter, when he had been overheard to swear that luck should not leave Lingborough till Miss Betty owned half the countryside?

MISS BETTY IS SURPRISED

Miss Betty and Miss Kitty having accepted a polite invitation from Mrs. General Dunmaw, went down to tea with that lady one fine evening in this eventful summer.

Death had made a gap or two in the familiar circle during the last fourteen years, but otherwise it was quite the same, except that the lawyer was married and not quite so sarcastic, and that Mrs. Brown Jasey had brought a young niece with her dressed in the latest fashion, which looked quite as odd as new fashions are wont to do, and with a *coiffure* "enough to frighten the French away," as her aunt told her.

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It was while this young lady was getting more noise out of Mrs. Dunmaw's red silk and rosewood piano than had been shaken out of it during the last thirty years, that the lawyer brought his cup of coffee to Miss Betty's side, and said, suavely, "I hear wonderful accounts of Lingborough, dear Miss Betty."

"I am thankful to say, sir, that the farm is doing well this year. I am very thankful, for the past few years have been unfavorable, and we had begun to face the fact that it might be necessary to sell the old place. And I will not deny, sir, that it would have gone far to break my heart, to say nothing of my sister Kitty's."

"Oh, we shouldn't have let it come to that," said the lawyer; "I could have raised a loan——"

"Sir," said Miss Betty with dignity, "if we have our own pride, I hope it's an honest one. Lingborough will have passed out of our family when it's kept up on borrowed money."

"I *could* live in lodgings," added Miss Betty, firmly, "little as I've been accustomed to it, but *not in debt*."

"Well, well, my dear madam, we needn't talk about it now. But I'm dying of curiosity as to the mainstay of all this good luck."

"The turnips——" began Miss Betty.

"Bless my soul, Miss Betty!" cried the lawyer, "I'm not talking of turnips. I'm talking of Lob Lie-by-the-fire, as all the countryside is for that matter."

"The country people have plenty of tales of him," said Miss Betty, with some pride in the family goblin. "He used to haunt the old barns, they say, in my great-grandfather's time."

"And now you've got him back again," said the lawyer.

"Not that I know of," said Miss Betty.

On which the lawyer poured into her astonished ear all the

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latest news on the subject, and if it had lost nothing before reaching his house in the town, it rather gained in marvels as he repeated it to Miss Betty.

No wonder that the little lady was anxious to get home to question Thomasina, and that somewhat before the usual hour she said,—

“Sister Kitty, if it’s not too soon for the servant——”

And the parson, threading his way to where Mrs. Dunmaw’s china crape shawl (dyed crimson) shone in the bow window, said “The clergy should keep respectable hours, madam; especially when they are as old as I am. Will you allow me to thank you for a very pleasant evening, and to say good night?”

THE PARSON AND THE LUBBER-FIEND

“Do you think there’d be any harm in leaving It alone, sister Betty?” asked Miss Kitty, tremulously.

They had reached Lingborough, and the parson had come in with them, by Miss Betty’s request, and Thomasina had been duly examined.

“Eh, Miss Betty, why should ye chase away good luck with the minister?” cried she.

“Sister Kitty! Thomasina!” said Betty. “I would not accept good luck from a doubtful quarter to save Lingborough. But if It can face this excellent clergyman, the Being who haunted my great-grandfather’s farm is still welcome to the old barns, and you, Thomasina, need not grudge It cream or curds.”

“You’re quite right, sister Betty,” said Miss Kitty. “You always are; but oh, dear, oh, dear!”——

“Thomasina tells me,” said Miss Betty, turning to the parson, “that on chilly evenings It sometimes comes and lies by the

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kitchen fire after they have gone to bed, and I can distinctly remember my grandmother mentioning the same thing. Thomasina has of late left the kitchen door on the latch for Its convenience, and as they had to sit up late for us, she and Annie have taken their work into the still-room to leave the kitchen free for Lob Lie-by-the-fire. They have not looked into the kitchen this evening, as such beings do not like to be watched. But they fancy that they heard It come in. I trust, sir, that neither in myself nor my sister Kitty does timidity exceed a proper feminine sensibility, where duty is concerned. If you will be good enough to precede us, we will go to meet the old friend of my great-grandfather's fortunes, and we leave it entirely to your valuable discretion to pursue what course you think proper on the occasion."

"Is this the door?" said the parson, cheerfully, after knocking his head against black beams and just saving his legs down shallow and unexpected steps on his way to the kitchen—beams so unfelt and steps so familiar to the women that it had never struck them that the long passage was not the most straightforward walk a man could take—"I think you said It generally lies on the hearth?"

The happy thought struck Thomasina that the parson might be frightened out of his unlucky interference.

"Aye, aye, sir," said she from behind. "We've heard him rolling by the fire, and growling like thunder to himself. They say he's an awful size, too, with the strength of four men, and a long tail, and eyes like coals of fire."

But Thomasina spoke in vain, for the parson opened the door, and, as they passed in, the moonlight streaming through the latticed window showed Lob lying by the fire.

"There's his tail! Ay—k!" screeched Annie the lass, and

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away she went, without drawing breath, to the top garret, where she locked and bolted herself in, and sat her handbox flat, and screamed for help.

But it was the plummy tail of the sheep dog, who was lying there with the Lubber-Fiend. And Lob was asleep, with his arms round the sheep dog's neck, and the sheep-dog's head lay on his breast, and his own head touched the dog's.

And it was a smaller head than the parson had been led to expect, and it had thick black hair.

As the parson bent over the hearth, Thomasina took Miss Kitty round the waist, and Miss Betty clutched her black velvet bag till the steel beads ran into her hands, and they were quite prepared for an explosion, and sulphur, and blue lights, and thunder.

And then the parson's deep round voice broke the silence, saying,—

“Is that you, lad? God bless you, John Broom. You're welcome home!”

THE END

Some things—such as gossip—gain in the telling, but there are others before which words fail, though each heart knows its own power of sympathy. And such was the joy of the little ladies and of Thomasina at John Broom's return.

The sheep dog had had his satisfaction out long ago, and had kept it to himself, but how Pretty Cocky crowed, and chuckled, and danced, and bowed his crest, and covered his face with his amber wings, and kicked his seed-pot over, and spilled his water-pot on to the Derbyshire marble chess-table, and screamed till the room rang again, and went on screaming, with Miss Kitty's

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pocket-handkerchief over his head to keep him quiet, my poor pen can but imperfectly describe.

The desire to atone for the past which had led John Broom to act the part of one of those Good-Fellows who have, we must fear, finally deserted us, will be easily understood. And to a nature of his type, the earning of some self-respect, and of a new character before others, was perhaps a necessary prelude to future well-doing.

He did do well. He became "a good scholar," as farmers were then. He spent as much of his passionate energies on the farm as the farm would absorb, and he restrained the rest. It is not cockatoos only who have sometimes to live and be happy in this unfinished life with one wing clipped.

In fine weather, when the perch was put into the garden, Miss Betty was sometimes startled by stumbling on John Broom in the dusk, sitting on his heels, the unfastened chain in his hand, with his black head lovingly laid against Cocky's white and yellow poll, talking in a low voice, and apparently with the sympathy of his companion; and, as Miss Betty justly feared, of that "other side of the world," which they both knew, and which both at times had cravings to revisit.

Even after the sobering influences of middle age had touched him, and a wife and children bound him with the quiet ties of home, he had (at long intervals) his "restless times," when his good "missis" would bring out a little store laid by in one of the children's socks, and would bid him "Be off, and get a breath of the sea-air," but on condition that the sock went with him as his purse. John Broom always looked ashamed to go, but he came back the better, and his wife was quite easy in his absence with that confidence in her knowledge of "the master," which is so mysterious to the unmarried, and which Miss Betty looked upon

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as "want of feeling" to the end. She always dreaded that he would not return, and a little ruse which she adopted of giving him money to make bargains for foreign articles of *vertu* with the sailors, is responsible for many of the choicest ornaments in the Lingborough parlor.

"The sock'll bring him home," said Mrs. Broom, and home he came, and never could say what he had been doing. Nor was the account given by Thomasina's cousin, who was a tide-waiter down yonder, particularly satisfying to the women's curiosity. He said that John Broom was always about; that he went aboard of all the craft in the bay, and asked whence they came and whither they were bound. That, being once taunted to it, he went up the rigging of a big vessel like a cat, and came down it looking like a fool. That, as a rule, he gossiped and shared his tobacco with sailors and fishermen, and brought out the sock much oftener than was prudent for the benefit of the ragged boys who haunt the quay.

He had two other weaknesses, which a faithful biographer must chronicle.

A regiment on the march would draw him from the plough-tail itself, and "With daddy to see the soldiers" was held to excuse any of Mrs. Broom's children from household duties.

The other shall be described in the graphic language of that acute observer, the farm-bailiff.

"If there cam' an Irish beggar, wi' a stripy cloot roond him and a bellows under 's arm, and ca'd himsel' a Hielander, the lad wad gi'e him his silly head off his shoulders."

As to the farm-bailiff, perhaps no one felt more or said less than he did on John Broom's return. But the tones of his voice had tender associations for the boy's ears as he took off his speck-

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led hat, and after contemplating the inside for some moments, put it on again, and said,—

“Aweel, lad, sae ye’ve cam hame?”

But he listened with quivering face when John Broom told the story of M’Alister, and when it was ended he rose and went out, and “took the pledge” against drink, and—kept it.

Moved by similar enthusiasm, the cowherd took the pledge also, and if he didn’t keep it, he certainly drank less, chiefly owing to the vigilant oversight of the farm-bailiff, who now exercised his natural severity almost exclusively in the denunciation of all liquors whatsoever, from the cowherd’s whisky to Thomasina’s elder-flower wine.

The plain cousin left his money to the little old ladies, and Lingborough continued to flourish.

Partly perhaps because of this, it is doubtful if John Broom was ever looked upon by the rustics as quite “like other folk.”

The favorite version of his history is that he was Lob under the guise of a child; that he was driven away by new clothes; that he returned from unwillingness to see an old family go to ruin “which he had served for hundreds of years;” that the parson preached his last Sunday’s sermon at him; and that, having stood that test, he took his place among Christian people.

Whether a name invented off-hand, however plain and sensible, does not stick to a man as his father’s does, is a question. But John Broom was not often called by his.

With Scotch caution, the farm-bailiff seldom exceeded the safe title of “Man!” and the parson was apt to address him as “My dear boy” when he had certainly outgrown the designation.

Miss Betty called him John Broom, but the people called him by the name that he had earned.

And long after his black hair lay white and thick on his head,

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like snow on the old barn roof, and when his dark eyes were dim in an honored old age, the village children would point him out to each other, crying, "There goes Lob Lie-by-the-fire, the Luck of Lingborough!"

THE PEACE-EGG

A CHRISTMAS TALE

EVERY one ought to be happy at Christmas. But there are many things which ought to be, and yet are not; and people are sometimes sad even in the Christmas holidays.

The Captain and his wife were sad, though it was Christmas Eve. Sad, though they were in the prime of life, blessed with good health, devoted to each other and to their children, with competent means, a comfortable house on a little freehold property of their own, and, one might say, everything that heart could desire. Sad, though they were good people, whose peace of mind had a firmer foundation than their earthly goods alone; contented people, too, with plenty of occupation for mind and body. Sad—and in the nursery this was held to be past all reason—though the children were performing that ancient and most entertaining play or Christmas mystery of Good St. George of England, known as *The Peace-Egg*, for their benefit and behoof alone.

The play was none the worse that most of the actors were too young to learn parts, so that there was very little of the rather tedious dialogue, only plenty of dress and ribbons, and of fighting with the wooden swords. But though St. George looked bonny enough to warm any father's heart, as he marched up and

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down with an air learned by watching many a parade in barrack-square and drill-ground, and though the Valiant Slasher did not cry in spite of falling hard and the Doctor treading accidentally on his little finger in picking him up, still the Captain and his wife sighed nearly as often as they smiled, and the mother dropped tears as well as pennies into the cap which the King of Egypt brought round after the performance.

THE CAPTAIN'S WIFE

Many, many years back the Captain's wife had been a child herself, and had laughed to see the village mummers act the Peace-Egg, and had been quite happy on Christmas Eve. Happy, though she had no mother. Happy, though her father was a stern man, very fond of his only child, but with an obstinate will that not even she dared thwart. She had lived to thwart it, and he had never forgiven her. It was when she married the Captain. The old man had a prejudice against soldiers, which was quite reason enough, in his opinion, for his daughter to sacrifice the happiness of her future life by giving up the soldier she loved. At last he gave her her choice between the Captain and his own favor and money. She chose the Captain, and was disowned and disinherited.

The Captain bore a high character, and was a good and clever officer, but that went for nothing against the old man's whim. He made a very good husband, too; but even this did not move his father-in-law, who had never held any intercourse with him or his wife since the day of their marriage, and who had never seen his own grandchildren. Though not so bitterly prejudiced as the old father, the Captain's wife's friends had their doubts about the marriage. The place was not a military station, and they were quiet country folk who knew very little about soldiers,

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whilst what they imagined was not altogether favorable to "red-coats," as they called them. Soldiers are well-looking generally, it is true (and the Captain was more than well-looking—he was handsome); brave, of course, it is their business (and the Captain had V. C. after his name and several bits of ribbon on his patrol jacket). But then, thought the good people, they are here to-day and gone to-morrow, you "never know where you have them;" they are probably in debt, possibly married to several women in several foreign countries, and, though they are very courteous in society, who knows how they treat their wives when they drag them off from their natural friends and protectors to distant lands where no one can call them to account?

"Ah, poor thing!" said Mrs. John Bull, junior, as she took off her husband's coat on his return from business a week after the Captain's wedding, "I wonder how she feels? There's no doubt the old man behaved disgracefully; but it's a great risk marrying a soldier. It stands to reason, military men aren't domestic; and I wish—Lucy Jane, fetch your papa's slippers, quick!—she'd had the sense to settle down comfortably amongst her friends with a man who would have taken care of her."

"Officers are a wild set, I expect," said Mr. Bull, complacently, as he stretched his limbs in his own particular armchair, into which no member of his family ever intruded. "But the red-coats carry the day with plenty of girls who ought to know better. You women are always caught by a bit of finery. However, there's no use our bothering *our* heads about it. As she has brewed she must bake."

The Captain's wife's baking was lighter and more palatable than her friends believed. The Captain (who took off his own coat when he came home, and never wore slippers but in his dressing-room) was domestic enough. A selfish companion must,

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doubtless, be a great trial amid the hardships of military life, but when a soldier is kind-hearted he is often a much more helpful and thoughtful and handy husband than an equally well-meaning civilian. Amid the ups and downs of their wanderings, the discomforts of shipboard and of stations in the colonies, bad servants, and unwonted sicknesses, the Captain's tenderness never failed. If the life was rough the Captain was ready. He had been, by turns, in one strait or another, sick-nurse, doctor, carpenter, nursemaid, and cook to his family, and had, moreover, an idea that nobody filled these offices quite so well as himself. Withal, his very profession kept him neat, well-dressed, and active. In the roughest of their ever-changing quarters he was a smarter man, more like the lover of his wife's young days, than Mr. Bull amid his stationary comforts. Then if the Captain's wife was—as her friends said—"never settled," she was also for ever entertained by new scenes; and domestic mischances do not weigh very heavily on people whose possessions are few and their intellectual interests many. It is true that there were ladies in the Captain's regiment who passed by sea and land from one quarter of the globe to another, amid strange climates and customs, strange trees and flowers, beasts and birds; from the glittering snows of North America to the orchids of the Cape, from beautiful Pera to the lily-covered hills of Japan, and who in no place rose above the fret of domestic worries, and had little to tell on their return but of the universal misconduct of servants, from Irish "helps" in the colonies, to *compradors* and China-boys at Shanghai. But it was not so with the Captain's wife. Moreover, one becomes accustomed to one's fate, and she moved her whole establishment from the Curragh to Corfu with less anxiety than that felt by Mrs. Bull over a port-wine stain on the best tablecloth.

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And yet, as years went and children came, the Captain and his wife grew tired of traveling. New scenes were small comfort when they heard of the death of old friends. One foot of murky English sky was dearer, after all, than miles of the unclouded heavens of the South. The gray hills and overgrown lanes of her old home haunted the Captain's wife by night and day, and homesickness (that weariest of all sicknesses) began to take the light out of her eyes before their time. It preyed upon the Captain, too. Now and then he would say, fretfully, "I *should* like an English resting-place, however small, before *everybody* is dead! But the children's prospects have to be considered." The continued estrangement from the old man was an abiding sorrow also, and they had hopes that, if only they could get to England, he might be persuaded to peace and charity this time.

At last they were sent home. But the hard old father still would not relent. He returned their letters unopened. This bitter disappointment made the Captain's wife so ill that she almost died, and in one month the Captain's hair became iron gray. He reproached himself for having ever taken the daughter from her father, "to kill her at last," as he said. And (thinking of his own children) he even reproached himself for having robbed the old widower of his only child. After two years at home his regiment was ordered to India. He failed to effect an exchange, and they prepared to move once more—from Chatham to Calcutta. Never before had the packing to which she was so well accustomed been so bitter a task to the Captain's wife.

It was at the darkest hour of this gloomy time that the Captain came in, waving above his head a letter which changed all their plans.

Now close by the old home of the Captain's wife there had lived a man, much older than herself, who yet had loved her with

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a devotion as great as that of the young Captain. She never knew it, for when he saw that she had given her heart to his younger rival, he kept silence, and he never asked for what he knew he might have had—the old man's authority in his favor. So generous was the affection which he could never conquer, that he constantly tried to reconcile the father to his children whilst he lived, and, when he died, he bequeathed his house and small estate to the woman he had loved.

"It will be a legacy of peace," he thought, on his deathbed. "The old man cannot hold out when she and her children are constantly in sight. And it may please God that I shall know of the reunion I have not been permitted to see with my eyes."

And thus it came about that the Captain's regiment went to India without him, and that the Captain's wife and her father lived on opposite sides of the same road.

MASTER ROBERT

The eldest of the Captain's children was a boy. He was named Robert, after his grandfather, and seemed to have inherited a good deal of the old gentleman's character, mixed with gentler traits. He was a fair, fine boy, tall and stout for his age, with the Captain's regular features, and (he flattered himself) the Captain's firm step and martial bearing. He was apt—like his grandfather—to hold his own will to be other people's law, and (happily for the peace of the nursery) this opinion was devoutly shared by his brother Nicholas. Though the Captain had sold his commission, Robin continued to command an irregular force of volunteers in the nursery, and never was colonel more despotic. His brothers and sister were by turns infantry, cavalry, engineers, and artillery, according to his whim.

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and when his affections finally settled upon the Highlanders of "The Black Watch," no female power could compel him to keep his stockings above his knees or his knickerbockers below them.

The Captain alone was a match for his strong-willed son.

"If you please, sir," said Sarah, one morning, flouncing in upon the Captain, just as he was about to start for the neighboring town,— "If you please, sir, I wish you'd speak to Master Robert. He's past my powers."

"I've no doubt of it," thought the Captain, but he only said, "Well, what's the matter?"

"Night after night do I put him to bed," said Sarah, "and night after night does he get up as soon as I'm out of the room, and says he's orderly officer for the evening, and goes about in his night-shirt and his feet as bare as boards."

The Captain fingered his heavy mustache to hide a smile, but he listened patiently to Sarah's complaints.

"It ain't so much *him* I should mind, sir," she continued, "but he goes round the beds and wakes up the other young gentlemen and Miss Dora, one after another, and when I speak to him, he gives me all the sauce he can lay his tongue to, and says he's going round the guards. The other night I tried to put him back into his bed, but he got away and ran all over the house, me hunting him everywhere, and not a sign of him, till he jumps out on me from the garret-stairs and nearly knocks me down. 'I've visited the outposts, Sarah,' says he; 'all's well.' And off he goes to bed as bold as brass."

"Have you spoken to your mistress?" asked the Captain.

"Yes, sir," said Sarah. "And missis spoke to him, and he promised not to go round the guards again."

"Has he broken his promise?" asked the Captain, with a look of anger, and also of surprise.

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"When I opened the door last night, sir," continued Sarah, in her shrill treble, "what should I see in the dark but Master Robert a-walking up and down with the carpet-brush stuck in his arm. 'Who goes there?' says he. 'You owdacious boy!' says I, 'Didn't you promise your ma you'd leave off them tricks?' 'I'm not going round the guards,' says he; 'I promised not. But I'm for sentry duty to-night.' And say what I would to him, all he had for me was, 'You mustn't speak to a sentry on duty.' So I says, 'As sure as I live till morning, I'll go to your pa,' for he pays no more attention to his ma than to me, nor to any one else."

"Please to see that the chair-bed in my dressing-room is moved into your mistress's bedroom," said the Captain. "I will attend to Master Robert."

With this Sarah had to content herself, and she went back to the nursery. Robert was nowhere to be seen, and made no reply to her summons. On this the unwary nursemaid flounced into the bedroom to look for him, when Robert, who was hidden beneath a table, darted forth, and promptly locked her in.

"You're under arrest," he shouted, through the keyhole.

"Let me out!" shrieked Sarah.

"I'll send a file of the guard to fetch you to the orderly-room, by-and-by," said Robert, "for 'preferring frivolous complaints.'" And he departed to the farm-yard to look at the ducks.

That night, when Robert went up to bed, the Captain quietly locked him into his dressing-room, from which the bed had been removed.

"You're for sentry duty to-night," said the Captain. "The carpet-brush is in the corner. Good-evening."

As his father anticipated, Robert was soon tired of the sentry game in these new circumstances, and long before the night had half worn away he wished himself undressed and in his own com-

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fortable bed. At half-past twelve o'clock he felt as if he could bear it no longer, and knocked at the Captain's door.

"Who goes there?" said the Captain.

"Mayn't I go to bed, please?" whined poor Robert.

"Certainly not," said the Captain. "You're on duty."

And on duty poor Robert had to remain, for the Captain had a will as well as his son. So he rolled himself up in his father's railway rug, and slept on the floor.

The next night he was very glad to go quietly to bed, and remain there.

IN THE NURSERY

The Captain's children sat at breakfast in a large, bright nursery. It was the room where the old bachelor had died, and now *her* children made it merry. This was just what he would have wished.

They all sat round the table, for it was breakfast-time. There were five of them, and five bowls of boiled bread-and-milk smoked before them. Sarah (a foolish, gossiping girl, who acted as nurse till better could be found) was waiting on them, and by the table sat Darkie, the black retriever, his long, curly back swaying slightly from the difficulty of holding himself up, and his solemn hazel eyes fixed very intently on each and all of the breakfast bowls. He was as silent and sagacious as Sarah was talkative and empty-headed. The expression of his face was that of King Charles I as painted by Vandyke. Though large, he was unassuming. Pax, the pug, on the contrary, who came up to the first joint of Darkie's leg, stood defiantly on his dignity (and his short stumps). He always placed himself in front of the bigger dog, and made a point of hustling him in doorways and of going

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first downstairs. He strutted like a beadle, and carried his tail more tightly curled than a bishop's crook. He looked as one may imagine the frog in the fable would have looked had he been able to swell himself rather nearer to the size of the ox. This was partly due to his very prominent eyes, and partly to an obesity favored by habits of lying inside the fender and of eating meals proportioned more to his consequence than to his hunger. They were both favorites of two years' standing, and had very nearly been given away, when the good news came of an English home for the family, dogs and all.

Robert's tongue was seldom idle, even at meals. "Are you a Yorkshirewoman, Sarah?" he asked, pausing, with his spoon full in his hand.

"No, Master Robert," said Sarah.

"But you understand Yorkshire, don't you? I can't, very often; but mamma can, and can speak it, too. Papa says mamma always talks Yorkshire to servants and poor people. She used to talk Yorkshire to Themistocles, Papa said, and he said it was no good; for though Themistocles knew a lot of languages, he didn't know that. And mamma laughed, and said she didn't know she did.—Themistocles was our man-servant in Corfu," Robin added, in explanation. "He stole lots of things, Themistocles did; but papa found him out."

Robin now made a rapid attack on his bread-and-milk, after which he broke out again.

"Sarah, who is that tall old gentleman at church, in the seat near the pulpit? He wears a cloak like what the Blues wear, only all blue, and is tall enough for a Life-guardsman. He stood when we were kneeling down, and said, *Almighty and most merciful Father* louder than anybody."

Sarah knew who the old gentleman was, and knew also that

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the children did not know, and that their parents did not see fit to tell them as yet. But she had a passion for telling and hearing news, and would rather gossip with a child than not gossip at all. "Never you mind, Master Robin," she said, nodding sagaciously. "Little boys aren't to know everything."

"Ah, then, I know you don't know," replied Robert; "if you did, you'd tell. Nicholas, give some of your bread to Darkie and Pax. I've done mine. *For what we have received the Lord make us truly thankful.* Say your grace and put your chair away, and come along. I want to hold a court-martial." And, seizing his own chair by the seat, Robin carried it swiftly to its corner. As he passed Sarah he observed tauntingly, "You pretend to know, but you don't."

"I do," said Sarah.

"You don't," said Robin.

"Your ma's forbid you to contradict, Master Robin," said Sarah; "and if you do, I shall tell her. I know well enough who the old gentleman is, and perhaps I might tell you, only you'd go straight off and tell again."

"No, no, I wouldn't!" shouted Robin. "I can keep a secret, indeed I can! Pinch my little finger, and try. Do, do tell me, Sarah, there's a dear Sarah, and then I shall know you know." And he danced round her, catching at her skirts.

To keep a secret was beyond Sarah's powers.

"Do let my dress be, Master Robin," she said, "you're ripping out all the gathers, and listen while I whisper. As sure as you're a living boy, that gentleman's your own grandpapa."

Robin lost his hold on Sarah's dress; his arms fell by his side, and he stood with his brows knit for some minutes, thinking. Then he said, emphatically, "What lies you do tell, Sarah!"

"Oh, Robin!" cried Nicholas, who had drawn near, his thick

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curls standing stark with curiosity, "mamma said 'lies' wasn't a proper word, and you promised not to say it again."

"I forgot," said Robin. "I didn't mean to break my promise. But she does tell—ahem!—*you know what*."

"You wicked boy!" cried the enraged Sarah; "how dare you to say such a thing, and everybody in the place knows he's your ma's own pa."

"I'll go and ask her," said Robin, and he was at the door in a moment; but Sarah, alarmed by the thought of getting into a scrape herself, caught him by the arm.

"Don't you go, love; it'll only make your ma angry. There; it was all my nonsense."

"Then it's not true?" said Robin, indignantly. "What did you tell me so for?"

"It was all my jokes and nonsense," said the unscrupulous Sarah. "But your ma wouldn't like to know I've said such a thing. And Master Robert wouldn't be so mean as to tell tales, would he, love?"

"I'm not mean," said Robin, stoutly; "and I don't tell tales; but you do, and you tell *you know what*, besides. However, I won't go this time; but I'll tell you what—if you tell tales of me to papa any more, I'll tell him what you said about the old gentleman in the blue cloak." With which parting threat, Robin strode off to join his brothers and sisters.

Sarah's tale had put the court-martial out of his head, and he leaned against the tall fender, gazing at his little sister, who was tenderly nursing a well-worn doll. Robin sighed.

"What a long time that doll takes to wear out, Dora!" said he. "When will it be done?"

"Oh, not yet, not yet!" cried Dora, clasping the doll to her, and turning away. "She's quite good, yet."

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"How miserly you are," said her brother; "and selfish, too; for you know I can't have a military funeral till you'll let me bury that old thing."

Dora began to cry.

"There you go, crying!" said Robin, impatiently. "Look here: I won't take it till you get the new one on your birthday. You can't be so mean as not to let me have it then?"

But Dora's tears still fell. "I love this one so much," she sobbed. "I love her better than the new one."

"You want both; that's it," said Robin, angrily. "Dora, you're the meanest girl I ever knew!"

At which unjust and painful accusation Dora threw herself and the doll upon their faces, and wept bitterly. The eyes of the soft-hearted Nicholas began to fill with tears, and he squatted down before her, looking most dismal. He had a fellow-feeling for her attachment to an old toy, and yet Robin's will was law to him.

"Couldn't we make a coffin, and pretend the body was inside?" he suggested.

"No, we couldn't," said Robin. "I wouldn't play the Dead March after an empty candle-box. It's a great shame—and I promised she should be chaplain in one of my nightgowns, too."

"Perhaps you'll get just as fond of the new one," said Nicholas, turning to Dora.

But Dora only cried, "No, no! He shall have the new one to bury, but I'll keep my poor, dear, darling Betsy." And she clasped Betsy tighter than before.

"That's the meanest thing you've said yet," retorted Robin; "for you know mamma wouldn't let me bury the new one." And, with an air of great disgust, he quitted the nursery.

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"A MUMMING WE WILL GO"

Nicholas had sore work to console his little sister, and Betsy's prospects were in a very unfavorable state, when a diversion was caused in her favor by a new whim which put the military funeral out of Robin's head.

After he had left the nursery he strolled out of doors, and, peeping through the gate at the end of the drive, he saw a party of boys going through what looked like a military exercise with sticks and a good deal of stamping; but, instead of mere words of command, they all spoke by turns, as in a play. In spite of their strong Yorkshire accent, Robin overheard a good deal, and it sounded very fine. Not being at all shy, he joined them, and asked so many questions that he soon got to know all about it. They were practising a Christmas mumming-play, called "The Peace-Egg." Why it was called thus they could not tell him, as there was nothing whatever about eggs in it, and so far from being a play of peace, it was made up of a series of battles between certain valiant knights and princes, of whom St. George of England was the chief and conqueror. The rehearsal being over, Robin went with the boys to the sexton's house (he was father to the "King of Egypt"), where they showed him the dresses they were to wear. These were made of gay-colored materials, and covered with ribbons, except that of the "Black Prince of Paradine," which was black, as became his title. The boys also showed him the book from which they learned their parts, and which was to be bought for one penny at the post-office shop.

"Then are you the mummers who come round at Christmas, and act in people's kitchens, and people give them money, that mamma used to tell us about?" said Robin.

THE PEACE-EGG

St. George of England looked at his companions as if for counsel as to how far they might commit themselves, and then replied, with Yorkshire caution, "Well, I suppose we are." •

"And do you go out in the snow from one house to another at night; and, oh, don't you enjoy it?" cried Robin.

"We like it well enough," St. George admitted.

Robin bought a copy of "The Peace-Egg." He was resolved to have a nursery performance, and to act the part of St. George himself. The others were willing for what he wished, but there were difficulties. In the first place, there are eight characters in the play, and there were only five children. They decided among themselves to leave out "the Fool," and mamma said that another character was not to be acted by any of them, or indeed mentioned; "the little one who comes in at the end," Robin explained. Mamma had her reasons, and these were always good. She had not been altogether pleased that Robin had bought the play. It was a very old thing, she said, and very queer; not adapted for a child's play. If mamma thought the parts not quite fit for the children to learn, they found them much too long; so in the end she picked out some bits for each, which they learned easily, and which, with a good deal of fighting, made quite as good a story of it as they had done the whole. What may have been wanting otherwise was made up for by the dresses, which were charming.

Robin was St. George, Nicholas the Valiant Slasher, Dora the Doctor, and the other two Hector and the King of Egypt. "And now we've no Black Prince!" cried Robin in dismay.

"Let Darkie be the Black Prince," said Nicholas. "When you wave your stick he'll jump for it, and then you can pretend to fight with him."

"It's not a stick, it's a sword," said Robin. "However, Darkie may be the Black Prince."

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"And what's Pax to be?" asked Dora; "for you know he will come if Darkie does, and he'll run in before everybody else, too."

"Then he must be the Fool," said Robin, "and it will do very well, for the Fool comes in before the rest, and Pax can have his red coat on, and the collar with the little bells."

CHRISTMAS EVE

Robin thought that Christmas would never come. To the Captain and his wife it seemed to come too fast. They had hoped it might bring reconciliation with the old man, but it seemed they had hoped in vain.

There were times now when the Captain almost regretted the old bachelor's bequest. The familiar scenes of her old home sharpened his wife's grief. To see her father every Sunday in church, with marks of age and infirmity upon him, but with not a look of tenderness for his only child, this tried her sorely.

"She felt it less abroad," thought the Captain. "An English home in which she frets herself to death is, after all, no great boon."

Christmas Eve came.

"I'm sure it's quite Christmas enough now," said Robin. "We'll have 'The Peace-Egg' to-night."

So as the Captain and his wife sat sadly over their fire, the door opened, and Pax ran in shaking his bells, and followed by the nursery mummers. The performance was most successful. It was by no means pathetic, and yet, as has been said, the Captain's wife shed tears.

"What is the matter, mamma?" said St. George, abruptly dropping his sword and running up to her.

"Don't tease mamma with questions," said the Captain; "she is not very well, and rather sad. We must all be very kind and

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good to poor dear mamma;” and the Captain raised his wife’s hand to his lips as he spoke. Robin seized the other hand and kissed it tenderly. He was very fond of his mother. At this moment Pax took a little run, and jumped on to mamma’s lap, where, sitting facing the company, he opened his black mouth and yawned, with a ludicrous inappropriateness worthy of any clown. It made everybody laugh.

“And now we’ll go and act in the kitchen,” said Nicholas.

“Supper at nine o’clock, remember,” shouted the Captain. “And we are going to have real frumenty and Yule cakes, such as mamma used to tell us of when we were abroad.”

“Hurrah!” shouted the mummers, and they ran off, Pax leaping from his seat just in time to hustle the Black Prince in the doorway. When the dining-room door was shut, St. George raised his hand, and said “Hush!”

The mummers pricked their ears, but there was only a distant harsh and scraping sound, as of stones rubbed together.

“They’re cleaning the passages,” St. George went on, “and Sarah told me they meant to finish the mistletoe, and have everything cleaned up by supper-time. They don’t want us, I know. Look here, we’ll go *real mumming* instead. That *will* be fun!”

The Valiant Slasher grinned with delight.

“But will mamma let us?” he inquired.

“Oh, it will be all right if we’re back by supper-time,” said St. George, hastily. “Only, of course, we must take care not to catch cold. Come and help me to get some wraps.”

The old oak chest in which spare shawls, rugs, and coats were kept was soon ransacked, and the mummers’ gay dresses hidden by motley wrappers. But no sooner did Darkie and Pax behold the coats, etc., than they at once began to leap and bark, as it was their custom to do when they saw any one dressing to go out.

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Robin was sorely afraid that this would betray them; but though the Captain and his wife heard the barking they did not guess the cause.

So the front door being very gently opened and closed, the nursery mummers stole away.

THE NURSERY MUMMERS AND THE OLD MAN

It was a very fine night. The snow was well-trodden on the drive, so that it did not wet their feet, but on the trees and shrubs it hung soft and white.

"It's much jollier being out at night than in the daytime," said Robin.

"Much," responded Nicholas, with intense feeling.

"We'll go a wassailing next week," said Robin. "I know all about it, and perhaps we shall get a good lot of money, and then we'll buy tin swords with scabbards for next year. I don't like these sticks. Oh, dear, I wish it wasn't so long between one Christmas and another."

"Where shall we go first?" asked Nicholas, as they turned into the high road. But before Robin could reply, Dora clung to Nicholas, crying, "Oh, look at those men!"

The boys looked up the road, down which three men were coming in a very unsteady fashion, and shouting as they rolled from side to side.

"They're drunk," said Nicholas; "and they're shouting at us."

"Oh, run, run!" cried Dora; and down the road they ran, the men shouting and following them. They had not run far, when Hector caught his foot in the Captain's great-coat, which he was wearing, and came down headlong in the road. They were close by a gate, and when Nicholas had set Hector upon his legs, St. George hastily opened it.

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"This is the first house," he said. "We'll act here;" and all, even the Valiant Slasher, pressed in as quickly as possible. Once safe within the grounds, they shouldered their sticks, and resumed their composure.

"You're going to the front door," said Nicholas. "Mummers ought to go to the back."

"We don't know where it is," said Robin, and he rang the front-door bell. There was a pause. Then lights shone, steps were heard, and at last a sound of much unbarring, unbolting, and unlocking. It might have been a prison. Then the door was opened by an elderly, timid-looking woman, who held a tallow candle above her head.

"Who's there?" she said, "at this time of night."

"We're Christmas mummers," said Robin, stoutly; "we didn't know the way to the back door, but——"

"And don't you know better than to come here?" said the woman. "Be off with you, as fast as you can."

"You're only the servant," said Robin. "Go and ask your master and mistress if they wouldn't like to see us act. We do it very well."

"You impudent boy, be off with you!" repeated the woman. "Master'd no more let you nor any other such rubbish set foot in this house——"

"Woman!" shouted a voice close behind her, which made her start as if she had been shot, "who authorizes you to say what your master will or will not do, before you've asked him? The boy is right. You *are* the servant, and it is not your business to choose for me whom I shall or shall not see."

"I meant no harm, sir, I'm sure," said the housekeeper; "but I thought you'd never——"

"My good woman," said her master, "if I had wanted some-

body to think for me, you're the last person I should have employed. I hire you to obey orders, not to think."

"I'm sure, sir," said the housekeeper, whose only form of argument was reiteration, "I never thought you would have seen them——"

"Then you were wrong," shouted her master. "I will see them. Bring them in."

He was a tall, gaunt old man, and Robin stared at him for some minutes, wondering where he could have seen somebody very like him. At last he remembered. It was the old gentleman of the blue cloak.

The children threw off their wraps, the housekeeper helping them, and chattering ceaselessly, from sheer nervousness.

"Well, to be sure," said she, "their dresses are pretty, too. And they seem quite a better sort of children, they talk quite genteel. I might ha' knowed they weren't like common mummers, but I was so flusterated hearing the bell go so late, and——"

"Are they ready?" said the old man, who had stood like a ghost in the dim light of the flaring tallow candle, grimly watching the proceedings.

"Yes, sir. Shall I take them to the kitchen, sir?"

"——for you and the other idle hussies to gape and grin at? No. Bring them to the library," he snapped, and then stalked off, leading the way.

The housekeeper accordingly led them to the library, and then withdrew, nearly falling on her face as she left the room by stumbling over Darkie, who slipped in last like a black shadow.

The old man was seated in a carved oak chair by the fire.

"I never said the dogs were to come in," he said.

"But we can't do without them, please," said Robin, boldly.

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"You see there are eight people in 'The Peace-Egg,' and there are only five of us; and so Darkie has to be the Black Prince, and Pax has to be the Fool, and so we have to have them."

"Five and two make seven," said the old man, with a grim smile; "what do you do for the eighth?"

"Oh, that's the little one at the end," said Robin, confidentially. "Mamma said we weren't to mention him, but I think that's because we're children.—You're grown up, you know, so I'll show you the book, and you can see for yourself," he went on, drawing "The Peace-Egg" from his pocket; "there, that's the picture of him, on the last page; black, with horns and a tail."

The old man's stern face relaxed into a broad smile as he examined the grotesque woodcut; but when he turned to the first page the smile vanished in a deep frown, and his eyes shone like hot coals with anger. He had seen Robin's name.

"Who sent you here?" he asked, in a hoarse voice. "Speak, and speak the truth! Did your mother send you here?"

Robin thought the old man was angry with them for playing truant. He said, slowly, "N—no. She didn't exactly send us; but I don't think she'll mind our having come if we get back in time for supper. Mamma never *forbid* our going mumming, you know."

"I don't suppose she ever thought of it," Nicholas said, candidly, wagging his curly head from side to side.

"She knows we're mummers," said Robin, "for she helped us. When we were abroad, you know, she used to tell us about the mummers acting at Christmas, when she was a little girl; and so we thought we'd be mummers, and so we acted to papa and mamma, and so we thought we'd act to the maids, but they were cleaning the passages, and so we thought we'd really go mumming; and we've got several other houses to go to before supper-

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time; we'd better begin, I think," said Robin; and without more ado he began to march round and round, raising his sword and shouting,—

"I am St. George, who from Old England sprung,
My famous name throughout the world hath rung."

And the performance went off quite as creditably as before.

As the children acted the old man's anger wore off. He watched them with an interest he could not repress. When Nicholas took some hard thwacks from St. George without flinching, the old man clapped his hands; and, after the encounter between St. George and the Black Prince, he said he would not have had the dogs excluded on any consideration. It was just at the end, when they were all marching round and round, holding on by each other's swords "over the shoulder," and singing "A mumming we will go, etc.," that Nicholas suddenly brought the circle to a standstill by stopping dead short, and staring up at the wall before him.

"What *are* you stopping for?" said St. George, turning indignantly round.

"Look there!" cried Nicholas, pointing to a little painting which hung above the old man's head.

Robin looked, and said, abruptly, "It's Dora."

"Which is Dora?" asked the old man, in a strange, sharp tone.

"Here she is," said Robin and Nicholas in one breath, as they dragged her forward.

"She's the Doctor," said Robin; "and you can't see her face for her things. Dor, take off your cap and pull back that hood. There! Oh, it *is* like her!"

It was a portrait of her mother as a child; but of this the

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nursery mummers knew nothing. The old man looked as the peaked cap and hood fell away from Dora's face and fair curls, and then he uttered a sharp cry, and buried his head upon his hands. The boys stood stupefied, but Dora ran up to him, and, putting her little hands on his arms, said, in childish pitying tones, "Oh, I am so sorry! Have you got a headache? May Robin put the shovel in the fire for you? Mamma has hot shovels for her headaches." And, though the old man did not speak or move, she went on coaxing him, and stroking his head, on which the hair was white. At this moment Pax took one of his unexpected runs, and jumped on to the old man's knee, in his own particular fashion, and then yawned at the company. The old man was startled, and lifted his face suddenly. It was wet with tears.

"Why, you're crying!" exclaimed the children with one breath.

"It's very odd," said Robin, fretfully. "I can't think what's the matter to-night. Mamma was crying, too, when we were acting, and papa said we weren't to tease her with questions, and he kissed her hand, and I kissed her hand, too. And papa said we must all be very good and kind to poor dear mamma, and so I mean to be, she's so good. And I think we'd better go home, or perhaps she'll be frightened," Robin added.

"She's so good, is she?" asked the old man. He had put Pax off his knee, and taken Dora on to it.

"Oh, isn't she!" said Nicholas, swaying his curly head from side to side as usual.

"She's always good," said Robin, emphatically; "and so's papa. But I'm always doing something I oughtn't to," he added slowly. "But then, you know, I don't pretend to obey Sarah. I don't care a fig for Sarah; and I won't obey any woman but mamma."

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"Who's Sarah?" asked the grandfather.

"She's our nurse," said Robin, "and she tells—I mustn't say what she tells—but it's not the truth. She told one about *you* the other day," he added.

"About me?" said the old man.

"She said you were our grandpapa. So then I knew she was telling *you know what*."

"How did you know it wasn't true?" the old man asked.

"Why, of course," said Robin, "if you were our mamma's father, you'd know her, and be very fond of her, and come and see her. And then you'd be our grandfather, too, and you'd have us to see you, and perhaps give us Christmas-boxes. I wish you were," Robin added with a sigh. "It would be very nice."

"Would *you* like it?" asked the old man of Dora.

And Dora, who was half asleep and very comfortable, put her little arms about his neck as she was wont to put them round the Captain's, and said, "Very much."

He put her down at last, very tenderly, almost unwillingly, and left the children alone. By-and-by he returned, dressed in the blue cloak, and took Dora up again.

"I will see you home," he said.

The children had not been missed. The clock had only just struck nine when there came a knock on the door of the dining-room, where the Captain and his wife still sat by the Yule log. She said "Come in," wearily, thinking it was the frumenty and the Christmas cakes.

But it was her father, with her child in his arms!

PEACE AND GOODWILL

Lucy Jane Bull and her sisters were quite old enough to



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THIS WAS A PROPER CHRISTMAS INDEED.

THE PEACE-EGG

understand a good deal of grown-up conversation when they overheard it. Thus, when a friend of Mrs. Bull's observed during an afternoon call that she believed that "officers' wives were very dressy," the young ladies were at once resolved to keep a sharp look-out for the Captain's wife's bonnet in church on Christmas Day.

The Bulls had just taken their seats when the Captain's wife came in. They really would have hid their faces, and looked at the bonnet afterwards, but for the startling sight that met the gaze of the congregation. The old grandfather walked into church abreast of the Captain.

"They've met in the porch," whispered Mr. Bull under the shelter of his hat.

"They can't quarrel publicly in a place of worship," said Mrs. Bull, turning pale.

"She's gone into his seat," cried Lucy Jane in a shrill whisper.

"And the children after her," added the other sister, incautiously aloud.

There was now no doubt about the matter. The old man in his blue cloak stood for a few moments politely disputing the question of precedence with his handsome son-in-law. Then the Captain bowed and passed in, and the old man followed him.

By the time that the service was ended everybody knew of the happy peacemaking, and was glad. One old friend after another came up with blessings and good wishes. This was a proper Christmas, indeed, they said. There was a general rejoicing.

But only the grandfather and his children knew that it was hatched from "The Peace-Egg."

DADDY DARWIN'S DOVECOT

PREAMBLE

A SUMMER's afternoon. Early in the summer, and late in the afternoon; with odors and colors deepening, and shadows lengthening, towards evening.

Two gaffers gossiping, seated side by side upon a Yorkshire wall. A wall of sandstone of many colors, glowing redder and yellower as the sun goes down; well cushioned with moss and lichen, and deep-set in rank grass on this side, where the path runs, and in blue hyacinths on that side, where the wood is, and where—on the gray and still naked branches of young oaks—sit divers crows, not less solemn than the gaffers, and also gossiping.

One gaffer in work-day clothes, not unpicturesque of form and hue. Gray, home-knit stockings, and coat and knee-breeches of corduroy, which takes tints from Time and Weather as harmoniously as wooden palings do; so that field laborers (like some insects) seem to absorb or mimic the colors of the vegetation round them and of their native soil. That is, on work-days. Sunday-best is a different matter, and in this the other gaffer was clothed. He was dressed like the crows above him, *fit excepted*: the reason for which was, that he was only a visitor, a revisitor to

NOTE.—It will be plain to the reader that the birds here described are Rooks (*corvus frugilegus*). I have allowed myself to speak of them by their generic or family name of Crow, this being a common country practice. The genus *corvus*, or *Crow*, includes the Raven, the Carrion Crow, the Hooded Crow, the Jackdaw, and the Rook.

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the home of his youth, and wore his Sunday (and funeral) suit to mark the holiday.

Continuing the path, a stone pack-horse track, leading past a hedge snow-white with may, and down into a little wood, from the depths of which one could hear a brook babbling. Then up across the sunny field beyond, and yet up over another field to where the brow of the hill is crowned by old farm-buildings standing against the sky.

Down this stone path a young man going whistling home to tea. Then staying to bend a swarthy face to the white may to smell it, and then plucking a huge branch on which the blossom lies like a heavy fall of snow, and throwing that aside for a better, and tearing off another and yet another, with the prodigal recklessness of a pauper; and so, whistling, on into the wood with his arms full.

Down the sunny field, as he goes up it, a woman coming to meet him—with *her* arms full. Filled by a child with a may-white frock, and hair shining with the warm colors of the sandstone. A young woman, having a fair forehead visible a long way off, and buxom cheeks, and steadfast eyes. When they meet he kisses her, and she pulls his dark hair and smooths her own, and cuffs him in country fashion. Then they change burdens, and she takes the may into her apron (stooping to pick up fallen bits), and the child sits on the man's shoulder, and cuffs and lugs its father as the mother did, and is chidden by her and kissed by him. And all the babbling of their chiding and crowing and laughter comes across the babbling of the brook to the ears of the old gaffers gossiping on the wall.

Gaffer I spits out an over-munched stalk of meadow soft-grass, and speaks:

“D’ye see yon chap?”

DADDY DARWIN'S DOVECOTE

Gaffer II takes up his hat and wipes it round with a spotted handkerchief (for your Sunday hat is a heating thing for work-day wear) and puts it on, and makes reply:

"Aye. But he beats me. And—see thee!—he's t' first that's beat me yet. Why, lad! I've met young chaps to-day I could ha' sworn to for mates of mine forty year back—if I hadn't ha' been i' t' churchyard spelling over their fathers' tumstuns!"

"Aye. There's a many old standards gone home o' lately."

"What do they call *him*?"

"T' young chap?"

"Aye."

"They *call* him—Darwin."

"Dar—win? I should know a Darwin. They're old standards, is Darwins. What's he to Daddy Darwin of t' Dovecot yonder?"

"He *owns* t' Dovecot. Did ye see t' lass?"

"Aye. Shoo's his missus, I reckon?"

"Aye."

"What did they call her?"

"Phoebe Shaw they called her. And if she'd been *my* lass—but that's nother here nor there, and he's got t' Dovecot."

"Shaw? *They're* old standards, is Shaws. Phoebe? They called her mother Phoebe. Phoebe Johnson. She were a dainty lass! My father were very fond of Phoebe Johnson. He said she allus put him i' mind of our orchard on drying days; pink and white apple-blossom and clean clothes. And yon's her daughter? Where d'ye say t' young chap come from? He don't look like hereabouts."

"He don't come from hereabouts. And yet he do come from hereabouts, as one may say. Look ye here. He comes from t' wukhus. That's the short and the long of it."

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"*The workhouse?*"

"Aye."

Stupefaction. The crows chattering wildly overhead.

"And he owns Darwin's Dovecot?"

"He owns Darwin's Dovecot."

"And how i' t' name o' all things did that come about?"

"Why, I'll tell thee. It was i' this fashion."

Not without reason does the wary writer put gossip in the mouths of gaffers rather than of gammers. Male gossips love scandal as dearly as female gossips do, and they bring to it the stronger relish and energies of their sex. But these were country gaffers, whose speech—like shadows—grows lengthy in the leisurely hours of eventide. The gentle reader shall have the tale in plain narration.

SCENE I

ONE Saturday night (some eighteen years earlier than the date of this gaffer-gossiping) the parson's daughter sat in her own room before the open drawer of a bandy-legged black oak table, *balancing her bags*. The bags were money-bags, and the matter shall be made clear at once.

In this parish, as in others, progress and the multiplication of weapons with which civilization and the powers of goodness push their conquests over brutality and the powers of evil, had added to the original duties of the parish priest, a multifarious and all but impracticable variety of offices; which, in ordinary and laic conditions, would have been performed by several more or less salaried clerks, bankers, accountants, secretaries, librarians, club-committees, teachers, lecturers, discount-for-ready-money dealers

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in clothing, boots, blankets, and coal, domestic-servant agencies, caterers for the public amusement, and preservers of the public peace.

The country parson (no less than statesmen and princes, than men of science and of letters) is responsible for a great deal of his work that is really done by the help-mate—woman. This explains why five out of the young lady's money-bags bore the following inscriptions in marking-ink: "Savings bank," "Clothing club," "Library," "Magazines and hymn-books," "Three-half-penny club;" and only three bore reference to private funds, as "House-money," "Allowance," "Charity."

It was the bag bearing this last and greatest name which the parson's daughter now seized and emptied into her lap. A ten-shilling piece, some small silver, and two-pence halfpenny jingled together, and roused a silver-haired, tawny-pawed terrier, who left the hearthrug and came to smell what was the matter. His mistress's right hand—absently caressing—quieted his feelings; and with the left she held the ten-shilling piece between finger and thumb, and gazed thoughtfully at the other bags as they squatted in a helpless row, with twine-tied mouths hanging on all sides. It was only after anxious consultation with an account-book that the half sovereign was exchanged for silver; thanks to the clothing-club bag, which looked leaner for the accommodation. In the three-halfpenny bag (which bulged with pence) some silver was further solved into copper, and the charity bag was handsomely distended before the whole lot was consigned once more to the table-drawer.

Anyone accustomed to bookkeeping must smile at this bag-keeping of accounts; but the parson's daughter could never "bring her mind" to keeping the funds apart on paper, and mixing the actual cash. Indeed, she could never have brought her con-

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science to it. Unless she had taken the tenth for "charity" from her dress and pocket-money in coin, and put it then and there into the charity bag, this self-imposed rule of the duty of almsgiving would not have been performed to her soul's peace.

The problem which had been exercising her mind that Saturday night was how to spend what was left of her benevolent fund in a treat for the children of the neighboring workhouse. The fund was low, and this had decided the matter. The following Wednesday would be her twenty-first birthday. If the children came to tea with her, the foundation of the entertainment would, in the natural course of things, be laid in the Vicarage kitchen. The charity bag would provide the extras of the feast,—nuts, toys, and the like.

When the parson's daughter locked the drawer of the bandy-legged table, she did so with the vigor of one who has made up her mind, and set about the rest of her Saturday night's duties without further delay.

She put out her Sunday clothes, and her Bible and Prayer-book, and class-book and pencil, on the oak chest at the foot of the bed. She brushed and combed the silver-haired terrier, who looked abjectly depressed whilst this was doing, and preposterously proud when it was done. She washed her own hair, and studied her Sunday-school lesson for the morrow whilst it was drying. She spread a colored quilt at the foot of her white one, for the terrier to sleep on—a slur which he always deeply resented.

Then she went to bed, and slept as one ought to sleep on Saturday night, who is bound to be at the Sunday School by 9.15 on the following morning, with a clear mind on the Rudiments of the Faith, the history of the Prophet Elisha, and the destination of each of the parish magazines.

DADDY DARWIN'S DOVECOTE

SCENE II

FATHERLESS—motherless—homeless!

A little workhouse boy, with a swarthy face and tidily-cropped black hair, as short and thick as the fur of a mole, was grubbing, not quite so cleverly as a mole, in the workhouse garden.

He had been set to weed, but the weeding was very irregularly performed, for his eyes and heart were in the clouds, as he could see them over the big boundary wall. For there—now dark against the white, now white against the gray—some Air Tumbler pigeons were turning somersaults on their homeward way, at such short and regular intervals that they seemed to be tying knots in their lines of flight.

It was too much! The small gardener shamelessly abandoned his duties, and, curving his dirty paws on each side of his mouth, threw his whole soul into shouting words of encouragement to the distant birds.

“That’s a good un! On with thee! Over ye go! Oo—ooray!”

It was this last prolonged cheer which drowned the sound of footsteps on the path behind him, so that if he had been a tumbler pigeon himself he could not have jumped more nimbly when a man’s hand fell upon his shoulder. Up went his arms to shield his ears from a well-merited cuffing; but Fate was kinder to him than he deserved. It was only an old man (prematurely aged with drink and consequent poverty), whose faded eyes seemed to rekindle as he also gazed after the pigeons, and spoke as one who knows.

“Yon’s Daddy Darwin’s Tumblers.”

This old pauper had only lately come into “the House” (the house that never was a home!), and the boy clung eagerly to his flannel sleeve, and plied him thick and fast with questions about

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the world without the workhouse walls, and about the happy owner of those yet happier creatures who were free not only on the earth, but in the skies.

The poor old pauper was quite as willing to talk as the boy was to listen. It restored some of that self-respect which we lose under the consequences of our follies to be able to say that Daddy Darwin and he had been mates together, and had had pigeon-fancying in common "many a long year afore" he came into the House.

And so these two made friendship over such matters as will bring man and boy together to the end of time. And the old pauper waxed eloquent on the feats of Homing Birds and Tumblers, and on the points of Almonds and Barbs, Fantails and Pouters; sprinkling his narrative also with high-sounding and heterogeneous titles, such as Dragons and Archangels, Blue Owls and Black Priests, Jacobines, English Horsemen and Trumpeters. And through much boasting of the high stakes he had had on this and that pigeon-match then, and not a few bitter complaints of the harsh hospitality of the House he "had come to" now, it never seemed to occur to him to connect the two, or to warn the lad who hung upon his lips that one cannot eat his cake with the rash appetites of youth, and yet hope to have it for the support and nourishment of his old age.

The longest story the old man told was of a "bit of a trip" he had made to Liverpool, to see some Antwerp Carriers flown from thence to Ghent, and he fixed the date of this by remembering that his twin sons were born in his absence, and that though their birthday was the very day of the race, his "missus turned stoopid," as women (he warned the boy) are apt to do, and refused to have them christened by uncommon names connected with the fancy. All the same, he bet the lads would have been

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nicknamed the Antwerp Carriers, and known as such to the day of their death, if this had not come so soon and so suddenly, of croup; when (as it oddly chanced) he was off on another "bit of a holiday" to fly some pigeons of his own in Lincolnshire.

This tale had not come to an end when a voice of authority called for "Jack March," who rubbed his mole-like head and went ruefully off, muttering that he should "catch it now."

"Sure enough! sure enough!" chuckled the unamiable old pauper.

But again Fate was kinder to the lad than his friend. His negligent weeding passed unnoticed, because he was wanted in a hurry to join the other children in the school-room. The parson's daughter had come, the children were about to sing to her, and Jack's voice could not be dispensed with.

He "cleaned himself" with alacrity, and taking his place in the circle of boys standing with their hands behind their backs, he lifted up a voice worthy of a cathedral choir, whilst varying the monotony of sacred song by secretly snatching at the tail of the terrier as it went snuffing round the legs of the group. And in this feat he proved as much superior to the rest of the boys (who also tried it) as he excelled them in the art of singing.

Later on he learnt that the young lady had come to invite them all to have tea with her on her birthday. Later still he found the old pauper once more, and questioned him closely about the village and the Vicarage, and as to which of the parishioners kept pigeons, and where.

And when he went to his straw bed that night, and his black head throbbed with visions and high hopes, these were not entirely of the honor of drinking tea with a pretty young lady, and how one should behave himself in such abashing circumstances. He did not even dream principally of the possibility of getting

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hold of that silver-haired, tawny-pawed dog by the tail under freer conditions than those of this afternoon, though that was a refreshing thought.

What kept him long awake was thinking of this. From the top of an old walnut-tree at the top of a field at the back of the Vicarage, you could see a hill, and on the top of the hill some farm buildings. And it was here (so the old pauper had told him) that those pretty pigeons lived, who, though free to play about among the clouds, yet condescended to make an earthly home in Daddy Darwin's Dovecot.

SCENE III

Two and two, girls and boys, the young lady's guests marched down to the Vicarage. The schoolmistress was anxious that each should carry his and her tin mug, so as to give as little trouble as possible; but this was resolutely declined, much to the children's satisfaction, who had their walk with free hands, and their tea out of teacups and saucers like anybody else.

It was a fine day, and all went well. The children enjoyed themselves, and behaved admirably into the bargain. There was only one suspicion of misconduct, and the matter was so far from clear that the parson's daughter hushed it up, and, so to speak, dismissed the case.

The children were playing at some game in which Jack March was supposed to excel, but when they came to look for him he could nowhere be found. At last he was discovered, high up among the branches of an old walnut-tree at the top of the field, and though his hands were unstained and his pockets empty, the gardener, who had been the first to spy him, now loudly denounced him as an ungrateful young thief. Jack, with swollen eyes and

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cheeks besmirched with angry tears, was vehemently declaring that he had only climbed the tree to "have a look at Master Darwin's pigeons," and had not picked so much as a leaf, let alone a walnut; and the gardener, "shaking the truth out of him" by the collar of his fustian jacket, was preaching loudly on the sin of adding falsehood to theft, when the parson's daughter came up, and, in the end, acquitted poor Jack, and gave him leave to amuse himself as he pleased.

It did not please Jack to play with his comrades just then. He felt sulky and aggrieved. He would have liked to play with the terrier who had stood by him in his troubles, and barked at the gardener; but that little friend now trotted after his mistress, who had gone to choir-practice.

Jack wandered about among the shrubberies. By-and-by he heard sounds of music, and led by these he came to a gate in a wall, dividing the Vicarage garden from the churchyard. Jack loved music, and the organ and the voices drew him on till he reached the church porch; but there he was startled by a voice that was not only not the voice of song, but was the utterance of a moan so doleful that it seemed the outpouring of all his own lonely, and outcast, and injured feelings in one comprehensive howl.

It was the voice of the silver-haired terrier. He was sitting on the porch, his nose up, his ears down, his eyes shut, his mouth open, bewailing in bitterness of spirit the second and greater crook of his lot.

To what purpose were all the caresses and care and indulgence of his mistress, the daily walks, the weekly washings and combings, the constant companionship, when she betrayed her abiding sense of his inferiority, first, by not letting him sleep on the white quilt, and secondly, by never allowing him to go to church?

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Jack shared the terrier's mood. What were tea and plum-cake to him, when his pauper-breeding was so stamped upon him that the gardener was free to say—"A nice tale too! What's thou to do wi' doves, and thou a work'us lad?"—and to take for granted that he would thief and lie if he got the chance?

His disabilities were not the dog's, however. The parish church was his as well as another's, and he crept inside and leaned against one of the stone pillars, as if it were a big, calm friend.

Far away, under the transept, a group of boys and men held their music near to their faces in the waning light. Among them towered the burly choir-master, bâton in hand. The parson's daughter was at the organ. Well accustomed to produce his voice to good purpose, the choir-master's words were clearly to be heard throughout the building, and it was on the subject of articulation and emphasis, and the like, that he was speaking; now and then throwing in an extra aspirate in the energy of that enthusiasm without which teaching is not worth the name.

"That'll not do. We must have it altogether different. You two lads are singing like bumble-bees in a pitcher—horder there, boys!—it's no laughing matter—put down those papers and keep your eyes on me—inflate the chest——" (his own seemed to fill the field of vision) "and try and give forth those noble words as if you'd an idea what they meant."

No satire was intended or taken here, but the two boys, who were practising their duet in an anthem, laid down the music, and turned their eyes on their teacher.

"I'll run through the recitative," he added, "and take your time from the stick. And mind that OH."

The parson's daughter struck a chord, and then the burly choir-master spoke with the voice of melody,—

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"My heart is disquieted within me. My heart—my heart is disquieted within me. And the fear of death is fallen—fallen upon me."

The terrier moaned without, and Jack thought no boy's voice could be worth listening to after that of the choir-master. But he was wrong. A few more notes from the organ, and then, as night-stillness in a wood is broken by the nightingale, so upon the silence of the church a boy-alto's voice broke forth in obedience to the choir-master's uplifted hand:

"Then, I said—I said——"

Jack gasped, but even as he strained his eyes to see what such a singer could look like, with higher, clearer notes the soprano rose above him—"Then I sa—a—id," and the duet began:

"Oh, that I had wings—Oh, that I had wings like a dove!"

Soprano.—"Then would I flee away." *Alto.*—"Then would I flee away." *Together.*—"And be at rest—flee away and be at rest."

The clear young voices soared and chased each other among the arches, as if on the very pinions for which they prayed. Then—swept from their seats by an upward sweep of the choir-master's arms—the chorus rose as birds rise, and carried on the strain.

It was not a very fine composition, but this final chorus had the singular charm of fugue. And as the voices mourned like doves, "Oh, that I had wings!" and pursued each other with the plaintive passage, "Then would I flee away—then would I flee away——," Jack's ears knew no weariness of the repetition. It was strangely like watching the rising and falling of Daddy Darwin's pigeons, as they tossed themselves by turns upon their homeward flight.

After the fashion of the piece and period, the chorus was repeated, and the singers rose to supreme effort. The choir-mas-

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ter's hands flashed hither and thither, controlling, inspiring, directing. He sang among the tenors.

Jack's voice nearly choked him with longing to sing too. Could words of man go more deeply home to a young heart caged within workhouse walls?

"Oh, that I had wings like a dove! Then would I flee away——" the choir-master's white hands were fluttering downwards in the dusk, and the chorus sank with them—"flee away and be at rest!"

SCENE IV

JACK MARCH had a busy little brain, and his nature was not of the limp type that sits down with a grief. That most memorable tea-party had fired his soul with two distinct ambitions. First, to be a choir-boy; and, secondly, to dwell in Daddy Darwin's Dovecot. He turned the matter over in his mind, and patched together the following facts:

The Board of Guardians meant to apprentice him, Jack, to some master, at the earliest opportunity. Daddy Darwin (so the old pauper told him) was a strange old man, who had come down in the world, and now lived quite alone, with not a soul to help him in the house or outside it. He was "not to say *mazelin* yet, but getting helpless, and uncommon mean."

A nephew came one fine day and fetched away the old pauper, to his great delight. It was by their hands that Jack despatched a letter, which the nephew stamped and posted for him, and which was duly delivered on the following morning to Mr. Darwin of the Dovecot.

The old man had no correspondents, and he looked long at the letter before he opened it. It did credit to the teaching of the workhouse schoolmistress:

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"HONORED SIR,

"They call me Jack March. I'm a workhouse lad, but, Sir, I'm a good one, and the Board means to 'prentice me next time. Sir, if you face the Board and take me out you shall never regret it. Though I says it as shouldn't I'm a handy lad. I'll clean a floor with anyone, and am willing to work early and late, and at your time of life you're not what you was, and them birds must take a deal of seeing to. I can see them from the garden when I'm set to weed, and I never saw nought like them. Oh, Sir, I do beg and pray you let me mind your pigeons. You'll be none the worse of a lad about the place, and I shall be happy all the days of my life. Sir, I'm not unthankful, but, please God, I should like to have a home, and to be with them house doves.

"From your humble servant—hoping to be—

"JACK MARCH.

"Mr. Darwin, Sir. I love them Tumblers as if they was my own."

Daddy Darwin thought hard and thought long over that letter. He changed his mind fifty times a day. But Friday was the Board day, and when Friday came he "faced the Board." And the little workhouse lad went home to Daddy Darwin's Dovecot.

SCENE V

THE bargain was oddly made, but it worked well. Whatever Jack's parentage may have been (and he was named after the stormy month in which he had been born), the blood that ran in his veins could not have been beggars' blood. There was no hopeless, shiftless, invincible idleness about him. He found work for himself when it was not given him to do, and he attached himself passionately and proudly to all the belongings of his new home.

"Yon lad of yours seems handy enough, Daddy,—for a vagrant, as one may say."

Daddy Darwin was smoking over his garden wall, and Mrs. Shaw, from the neighboring farm, had paused in her walk for a chat. She was a notable housewife, and there was just a touch

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of envy in her sense of the improved appearance of the doorsteps and other visible points of the Dovecot. Daddy Darwin took his pipe out of his mouth to make way for the force of his reply:

"*Vagrant!* Nay, missus, yon's no vagrant. *He's fettling up all along.* Jack's the sort that if he finds a key he'll look for the lock; if ye give him a knife-blade he'll fashion a heft. Why, a vagrant's a chap that, if he'd all your maester owns to-morrow, he'd be on the tramp again afore t' year were out, and three years wouldn't repair t' mischief he'd leave behind him. A vagrant's a chap that if ye lend him a thing he loses it; if ye give him a thing he abuses it——"

"That's true enough, and there's plenty servant-girls the same," put in Mrs. Shaw.

"Maybe there be, ma'am—maybe there be; vagrants' children, I reckon. But yon little chap I got from t' House comes of folk that's had stuff o' their own, and cared for it—choose who they were."

"Well, Daddy," said his neighbor, not without malice, "I'll wish you a good evening. You've got a good bargain out of the parish, it seems."

But Daddy Darwin only chuckled, and stirred up the ashes in the bowl of his pipe.

"The same to you, ma'am—the same to you. Ay! he's a good bargain—a *very* good bargain is Jack March."

It might be supposed from the foregoing dialogue that Daddy Darwin was a model householder, and the little workhouse boy the neatest creature breathing. But the gentle reader who may imagine this is much mistaken.

Daddy Darwin's Dovecot was freehold, and when he inherited it from his father there was still attached to it a good bit of the land that had passed from father to son through more generations

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than the church registers were old enough to record. But the few remaining acres were so heavily mortgaged that they had to be sold. So that a bit of house property elsewhere, and the old homestead itself, were all that was left. And Daddy Darwin had never been the sort of man to retrieve his luck at home, or to seek it abroad.

That he had inherited a somewhat higher and more refined nature than his neighbors had rather hindered than helped him to prosper. And he had been unlucky in love. When what energies he had were in their prime, his father's death left him with such poor prospects that the old farmer to whose daughter he was betrothed broke off the match and married her elsewhere. His Alice was not long another man's wife. She died within a year from her wedding-day, and her husband married again within a year from her death. Her old lover was no better able to mend his broken heart than his broken fortunes. He only banished women from the Dovecot, and shut himself up from the coarse consolation of his neighbors.

In this loneliness, eating a kindly heart out in bitterness of spirit, with all that he ought to have had—

To plough and sow
and reap and mow—

gone from him, and in the hands of strangers, the pigeons, for which the Dovecot had always been famous, became the business and the pleasure of his life. But of late years his stock had dwindled, and he rarely went to pigeon-matches or competed in shows and races. A more miserable fancy rivalled his interest in pigeon fancying. His new hobby was hoarding; and money that, a few years back, he would have freely spent to improve his breed of Tumblers or back his Homing Birds he now added with stealthy

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pleasure to the store behind the secret panel of a fine old oak bedstead that had belonged to the Darwin who owned Dovecot when the sixteenth century was at its latter end. In this bedstead Daddy slept lightly of late, as old men will, and he had horrid dreams, which old men need not have. The queer faces carved on the panels (one of which hid the money hole) used to frighten him when he was a child. They did not frighten him now by their grotesque ugliness, but when he looked at them, *and knew which was which*, he dreaded the dying out of twilight into dark, and dreamed of aged men living alone, who had been murdered for their savings. These growing fears had had no small share in deciding him to try Jack March; and to see the lad growing stronger, nimbler, and more devoted to his master's interests day by day, was a nightly comfort to the poor old hoarder in the bed-head.

As to his keen sense of Jack's industry and carefulness, it was part of the incompleteness of Daddy Darwin's nature, and the ill-luck of his career, that he had a sensitive perception of order and beauty, and a shrewd observation of ways of living and qualities of character, and yet had allowed his early troubles to blight him so completely that he never put forth an effort to rise above the ruin, of which he was at least as conscious as his neighbors.

That Jack was not the neatest creature breathing, one look at him, as he stood with pigeons on his head and arms and shoulders, would have been enough to prove. As the first and readiest repudiation of his workhouse antecedents he had let his hair grow till it hung in the wildest elf-locks, and though the terms of his service with Daddy Darwin would not, in any case, have provided him with handsome clothes, such as he had were certainly not the better for any attention he bestowed upon them. 'As re-

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garded the Dovecot, however, Daddy Darwin had not done more than justice to his bargain. A strong and grateful attachment to his master, and a passionate love for the pigeons he tended, kept Jack constantly busy in the service of both; the old pigeon-fancier taught him the benefits of scrupulous cleanliness in the pigeon-cot, and Jack "stoned" the kitchen-floor and the door-steps on his own responsibility.

The time did come when he tidied up himself.

SCENE VI

DADDY DARWIN had made the first breach in his solitary life of his own free will but it was fated to widen. The parson's daughter soon heard that he had got a lad from the workhouse, the very boy who sang so well and had climbed the walnut-tree to look at Daddy Darwin's pigeons. The most obvious parish questions at once presented themselves to the young lady's mind. "Had the boy been christened? Did he go to Church and Sunday-school? Did he say his prayers and know his Catechism? Had he a Sunday suit? Would he do for the choir?"

Then, supposing (a not uncommon case) that the boy *had* been christened, *said* he said his prayers, *knew* his Catechism, and *was* ready for school, church, and choir, but had not got a Sunday suit—a fresh series of riddles propounded themselves to her busy brain. Would her father yield up his every-day coat and take his Sunday one into week-day wear? Could the charity bag do better than pay the tailor's widow for adapting this old coat to the new chorister's back, taking it in at the seams, turning it wrong-side out, and getting new sleeves out of the old tails? Could she herself spare the boots which the village cobbler had just resoled for her—somewhat clumsily—and would the "allow-

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ance" bag bear this strain? Might she hope to coax an old pair of trousers out of her cousin, who was spending his Long Vacation at the Vicarage, and who never reckoned very closely with *his* allowance, and kept no charity bag at all? Lastly, would "that old curmudgeon at the Dovecot" let his little farm-boy go to church and school and choir?

"I must go and persuade him," said the young lady.

What she said, and what (at the time) Daddy Darwin said, Jack never knew. He was at high sport with the terrier round the big sweetbrier bush, when he saw his old master splitting the seams of his weatherbeaten coat in the haste with which he plucked crimson clove carnations, as if they had been dandelions, and presented them, not ungracefully, to the parson's daughter.

Jack knew why she had come, and strained his ears to catch his own name. But Daddy Darwin was promising pipings of the cloves.

"They are such dear old-fashioned things," said she, burying her nose in the bunch.

"We're old-fashioned altogether, here, Miss," said Daddy Darwin, looking wistfully at the tumble-down house behind them.

"You're very pretty here," said she, looking also, and thinking what a sketch it would make, if she could keep on friendly terms with this old recluse, and get leave to sit in the garden. Then her conscience smiting her for selfishness, she turned her big eyes on him and put out her small hand.

"I am very much obliged to you, Mr. Darwin, very much obliged to you indeed. And I hope that Jack will do credit to your kindness. And thank you so much for the cloves," she added, hastily changing a subject which had cost some argument, and which she did not wish to have reopened.

Daddy Darwin had thoughts of reopening it. He was slowly

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getting his ideas together to say that the lad should see how he got along with the school before trying the choir, when he found the young lady's hand in his, and had to take care not to hurt it, whilst she rained thanks on him for the flowers.

"You're freely welcome, Miss," was what he did say after all.

In the evening, however, he was very moody, but Jack was dying of curiosity, and at last could contain himself no longer.

"What did Miss Jenny want, Daddy?" he asked.

The old man looked very grim.

"First to make a fool of me, and i' t' second place to make a fool of thee," was his reply. And he added with pettish emphasis, "They're all alike, gentle and simple. Lad, lad! If ye'd have any peace of your life never let a woman's foot across your threshold. Steek t' door of your house—if ye own one—and t' door o' your heart—if ye own one—and then ye'll never rue. Look at this coat!"

And the old man went grumpily to bed, and dreamed that Miss Jenny had put her little foot over his threshold, and that he had shown her the secret panel, and let her take away his savings.

And Jack went to bed, and dreamed that he went to school, and showed himself to Phoebe Shaw in his Sunday suit.

This dainty little damsel had long been making havoc in Jack's heart. The attraction must have been one of contrast, for whereas Jack was black and grubby, and had only week-day clothes—which were ragged at that—Phoebe was fair, and exquisitely clean, and quite terribly tidy. Her mother was the neatest woman in the parish. It was she who was wont to say to her trembling handmaid, "I hope I can black a grate without blacking myself." But little Phoebe promised so far to outdo her mother, that it seemed doubtful if she could "black herself" if she tried. Only the bloom of childhood could have resisted the pol-

ishing effects of yellow soap, as Phœbe's brow and cheeks did resist it. Her shining hair was compressed into a plait that would have done credit to a rope-maker. Her pinafores were speckless, and as to her white Whitsun frock—Jack could think of nothing the least like Phœbe in that, except a snowy fantail strutting about the dovecot roof; and, to say the truth, the likeness was most remarkable.

It has been shown that Jack March had a mind to be master of his fate, and he did succeed in making friends with little Phœbe Shaw. This was before Miss Jenny's visit, but the incident shall be recorded here.

Early on Sunday mornings it was Jack's custom to hide his work-day garb in an angle of the ivy-covered wall of the Dovecot garden, only letting his head appear over the top, from whence he watched to see Phœbe pass on her way to Sunday-school, and to bewilder himself with the sight of her starched frock, and her airs with her Bible and Prayer-book, and class card, and clean pocket-handkerchief.

Now, amongst the rest of her Sunday paraphernalia, Phœbe always carried a posy, made up with herbs and some strong-smelling flowers. Country-women take mint and southernwood to a long, hot service, as fine ladies take smelling-bottles (for it is a pleasant delusion with some writers, that the weaker sex is a strong sex in the working classes). And though Phœbe did not suffer from "fainty feels" like her mother, she and her little playmates took posies to Sunday-school, and refreshed their nerves in the steam of question and answer, and hair-oil and corduroy, with all the airs of their elders.

One day she lost her posy on her way to school, and her loss was Jack's opportunity. He had been waiting half-an-hour among the ivy, when he saw her just below him, fuzzling round

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and round like a kitten chasing its tail. He sprang to the top of the wall.

"Have ye lost something?" he gasped.

"My posy," said poor Phoebe, lifting her sweet eyes, which were full of tears.

A second spring brought Jack into the dust at her feet, where he searched most faithfully, and was wandering along the path by which she had come, when she called him back.

"Never mind," said she. "They'll most likely be dusty by now."

Jack was not used to think the worse of anything for a coating of dust; but he paused, trying to solve the perpetual problem of his situation, and find out what the little maid really wanted.

"'Twas only Old Man and marygolds," said she. "They're common enough."

A light illumined Jack's understanding.

"We've Old Man i' plenty; wait, and I'll get thee a fresh posy." And he began to reclimb the wall.

But Phoebe drew nearer. She stroked down her frock, and spoke mincingly but confidentially. "My mother says Daddy Darwin has red bergamot i' his garden. We've none i' ours. My mother always says there's nothing like red bergamot to take to church. She says it's a deal more refreshing than Old Man, and not so common. My mother says she's always meaning to ask Daddy Darwin to let us have a root to set; but she doesn't often see him, and when she does she doesn't think on. But she always says there's nothing like red bergamot; and my Aunt Nancy, she says the same."

"*Red*, is it?" cried Jack. "You wait there, love." And before Phoebe could say him nay, he was over the wall and back again with his arms full.

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"Is it any o' this lot?" he inquired, dropping a small haycock of flowers at her feet.

"Don't ye know one from t' other?" asked Phœbe, with round eyes of reproach. And spreading her clean kerchief on the grass she laid her Bible and Prayer-book and class card on it, and set vigorously and nattily to work, picking one flower and another from the fragrant confusion, nipping the stalks to even lengths, rejecting withered leaves, and instructing Jack as she proceeded.

"I suppose ye know a rose? That's a double velvet.* They dry sweeter than lavender for linen. These dark red things is pheasants' eyes; but, dear, dear, what a lad! ye've dragged it up by the roots! And eh! what will Master Darwin say when he misses these pink hollyhocks? And only in bud, too! *There's* red bergamot;† smell it!"

It had barely touched Jack's willing nose when it was hastily withdrawn. Phoebe had caught sight of Polly and Susan Smith coming to school, and crying that she should be late and must run, the little maid picked up her paraphernalia (not forgetting the red bergamot), and fled down the lane. And Jack, with equal haste, snatched up the tell-tale heap of flowers and threw them into a disused pigsty, where it was unlikely that Daddy Darwin would go to look for his poor pink hollyhocks.

SCENE VII

'APRIL was a busy month in the Dovecot. Young birds were chipping the egg, parent birds were feeding their young or relieving each other on the nest, and Jack and his master were constantly occupied and excited.

* Doublet Velvet, an old summer rose, not common now. It is described by Parkinson.

† Red Bergamot, or Twinflower. *Monarda Didyma*.

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One night Daddy Darwin went to bed; but, though he was tired, he did not sleep long. He had sold a couple of handsome but quarrelsome pigeons to advantage, and had added their price to the hoard in the bed-head. This had renewed his old fears, for the store was becoming very valuable; and he wondered if it had really escaped Jack's quick observation, or whether the boy knew about it, and, perhaps, talked about it. As he lay and worried himself he fancied he heard sounds without—the sound of footsteps and of voices. Then his heart beat till he could hear nothing else; then he could undoubtedly hear nothing at all; then he certainly heard something which probably was rats. And so he lay in a cold sweat, and pulled the rug over his face, and made up his mind to give the money to the parson, for the poor, if he was spared till daylight.

He *was* spared till daylight, and had recovered himself, and settled to leave the money where it was, when Jack rushed in from the pigeon-house with a face of dire dismay. He made one or two futile efforts to speak, and then unconsciously used the words Shakespeare has put into the mouth of Macduff, "All my pretty 'uns!" and so burst into tears.

And when the old man made his way to the pigeon-house, followed by poor Jack, he found that the eggs were cold and the callow young shivering in deserted nests, and that every bird was gone. And then he remembered the robbers, and was maddened by the thought that whilst he lay expecting thieves to break in and steal his money he had let them get safely off with his whole stock of pigeons.

Daddy Darwin had never taken up arms against his troubles, and this one crushed him. The fame and beauty of his house-doves were all that was left of prosperity about the place, and now there was nothing left—*nothing!* Below this dreary thought

lay a far more bitter one, which he dared not confide to Jack. He had heard the robbers; he might have frightened them away; he might at least have given the lad a chance to save his pets, and not a care had crossed his mind except for the safety of his own old bones, and of those miserable savings in the bed-head, which he was enduring so much to scrape together (oh, satire!) for a distant connection whom he had never seen. He crept back to the kitchen, and dropped in a heap upon the settle, and muttered to himself. Then his thoughts wandered. Supposing the pigeons were gone for good, would he ever make up his mind to take that money out of the money-hole, and buy a fresh stock? He knew he never would, and shrank into a meaner heap upon the settle as he said so to himself. He did not like to look his faithful lad in the face.

Jack looked him in the face, and, finding no help there, acted pretty promptly behind his back. He roused the parish constable, and fetched that functionary to the Dovecot before he had had bite or sup to break his fast. He spread a meal for him and Daddy, and borrowed the Shaws' light cart whilst they were eating it. The Shaws were good farmer-folk, they sympathized most fully; and Jack was glad of a few words of pity from Phœbe. She said she had watched the pretty pets "many a score of times," which comforted more than one of Jack's heartstrings. Phœbe's mother paid respect to his sense and promptitude. He had acted exactly as she would have done.

"Daddy was right enough about yon lad," she admitted. "He's not one to let the grass grow under his feet."

And she gave him a good breakfast whilst the horse was being "put to." It pleased her that Jack jumped up and left half a delicious cold tea-cake behind him when the cart-wheels grated outside. Mrs. Shaw sent Phœbe to put the cake in his pocket, and

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the "Maester" helped Jack in and took the reins. He said he would "see Daddy Darwin through it," and added the weight of his opinion to that of the constable, that the pigeons had been taken to "a beastly low place" (as he put it) that had lately been set up for pigeon-shooting in the outskirts of the neighboring town.

They paused no longer at the Dovecot than was needed to hustle Daddy Darwin on to the seat beside Master Shaw, and for Jack to fill his pockets with peas, and take his place beside the constable. He had certain ideas of his own on the matter, which were not confused by the jog-trot of the light cart, which did give a final jumble to poor Daddy Darwin's faculties.

No wonder they were jumbled! The terrors of the night past, the shock of the morning, the completeness of the loss, the piteous sight in the pigeon-house, remorseful shame, and then—after all these years, during which he had not gone half a mile from his own hearthstone—to be set up for all the world to see, on the front seat of a market-cart, back to back with the parish constable, and jogged off as if miles were nothing, and crowded streets were nothing, and the Beaulieu Gardens were nothing; Master Shaw talking away as easily as if they were sitting in two arm-chairs, and making no more of "stepping into" a lawyer's office, and "going on" to the Town Hall, than if he were talking of stepping up to his own bedchamber or going out into the garden!

That day passed like a dream, and Daddy Darwin remembered what happened in it as one remembers visions of the night.

He had a vision (a very unpleasing vision) of the proprietor of the Beaulieu Gardens, a big greasy man, with sinister eyes very close together, and a hook nose, and a heavy watch-chain, and a bullying voice. He browbeat the constable very soon, and even

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bullied Master Shaw into silence. No help was to be had from him in his loud indignation at being supposed to traffic with thieves. When he turned the tables by talking of slander, loss of time, and compensation, Daddy Darwin smelt money, and tremblingly whispered to Master Shaw to apologize and get out of it. "They're gone for good," he almost sobbed; "gone for good, like all t' rest! And I'll not be long after 'em."

But even as he spoke he heard a sound which made him lift up his head. It was Jack's call at feeding-time to the pigeons at the Dovecot. And quick following on this most musical and most familiar sound there came another. The old man put both his lean hands behind his ears to be sure that he heard it aright—the sound of wings—the wings of a dove!

The other men heard it and ran in. Whilst they were wrangling, Jack had slipped past them, and had made his way into a wired enclosure in front of the pigeon-house. And there they found him, with all the captive pigeons coming to his call; flying, fluttering, strutting, nestling from head to foot of him, he scattering peas like hail.

He was the first to speak, and not a choke in his voice. His iron temperament was at white heat, and, as he afterwards said, he "cared no more for yon dirty chap wi' the big nose, nor if he were a *ratten* * in a hayloft!"

"These is ours," he said shortly. "I'll count 'em over, and see if they're right. There was only one young 'un that could fly. A white 'un." ("It's here," interpolated Master Shaw.) "I'll pack 'em i' yon," and Jack turned his thumb to a heap of hampers in a corner. "T' carrier can leave t' baskets at t' toll-bar next Saturday, and ye may send your lad for 'em, if ye keep one."

The proprietor of the Beaulieu Gardens was not a man easily

* *Anglicè* Rat.

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abashed, but most of the pigeons were packed before he had fairly resumed his previous powers of speech. Then, as Master Shaw said, he talked "on the other side of his mouth." Most willing was he to help to bring to justice the scoundrels who had deceived him and robbed Mr. Darwin, but he feared they would be difficult to trace. His own feeling was that of wishing for pleasantness among neighbors. The pigeons had been found at the Gardens. That was enough. He would be glad to settle the business out of court.

Daddy Darwin heard the chink of the dirty man's money, and would have compounded the matter then and there. But not so the parish constable, who saw himself famous; and not so Jack, who turned eyes of smouldering fire on Master Shaw.

"Maester Shaw! you'll not let them chaps get off? Daddy's mazelin wi' trouble, sir, but I reckon you'll see to it."

"If it costs t' worth of the pigeons ten times over, I'll see to it, my lad," was Master Shaw's reply. And the parish constable rose even to a vein of satire as he avenged himself of the man who had slighted his office. "Settle it out of court? Ay! I dare say. And send t' same chaps to fetch 'em away again t' night after. Nay—bear a hand with this hamper, Maester Shaw, if you please—if it's all t' same to you, Mr. Proprietor, I think we shall have to trouble you to step up to t' Town Hall by-and-by, and see if we can't get shut of them mistaking friends o' yours for three month anyway."

If that day was a trying one to Daddy Darwin, the night that followed it was far worse. The thieves were known to the police, and the case was down to come on at the Town Hall the following morning; but meanwhile the constable thought fit to keep the pigeons under his own charge in the village lock-up. Jack refused to be parted from his birds, and remained with them, leav-

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ing Daddy Darwin alone in the Dovecot. He dared not go to bed, and it was not a pleasant night that he spent, dozing with weariness, and starting up with fright, in an arm-chair facing the money-hole.

Some things that he had been nervous about he got quite used to, however. He bore himself with sufficient dignity in the publicity of the Town Hall, where a great sensation was created by the pigeons being let loose without, and coming to Jack's call. Some of them fed from the boy's lips, and he was the hero of the hour, to Daddy Darwin's delight.

Then the lawyer and the lawyer's office proved genial and comfortable to him. He liked civil ways and smooth speech, and understood them far better than Master Shaw's brevity and uncouthness. The lawyer chatted kindly and intelligently; he gave Daddy Darwin wine and biscuit, and talked of the long standing of the Darwin family and its vicissitudes; he even took down some fat yellow books, and showed the old man how many curious laws had been made from time to time for the special protection of pigeons in dovecots. Very ancient statutes making the killing of a house-dove felony. Then 1 James I. c. 29, awarded three months' imprisonment "without bail or mainprise" to any person who should "shoot at, kill, or destroy with any gun, crossbow, stonebow, or longbow, any house-dove or pigeon;" but allowed an alternative fine of twenty shillings to be paid to the churchwardens of the parish for the benefit of the poor. Daddy Darwin hoped there was no such alternative in this case, and it proved that by 2 Geo. III. c. 29, the twenty-shilling fine was transferred to the owner of birds; at which point another client called, and the polite lawyer left Daddy to study the laws by himself.

It was when Jack was helping Master Shaw to put the horse into the cart, after the trial was over, that the farmer said to

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him, "I don't want to put you about, my lad, but I'm afraid you won't keep your master long. T' old gentleman's breaking up, mark my words! Constable and me was going into the *George* for a glass, and Master Darwin left us and went back to the office. I says, 'What are ye going back to t' lawyer for?' and he says, 'I don't mind telling you, Master Shaw, but it's to make my will.' And off he goes. Now, there's only two more things between that and death, Jack March! And one's the parson, and t' other's the doctor."

SCENE VIII

LITTLE Phoebe Shaw coming out of the day-school, and picking her way home to tea, was startled by folk running past her, and by a sound of cheering from the far end of the village, which gradually increased in volume, and was caught up by the bystanders as they ran. When Phoebe heard that it was "Constable, and Master Shaw, and Daddy Darwin and his lad, coming home, and the pigeons along wi' 'em," she felt inclined to run, too; but a fit of shyness came over her, and she demurely decided to wait by the school-gate till they came her way. They did not come. They stopped. What were they doing? Another bystander explained, "They're shaking hands wi' Daddy, and I reckon they're making him put up t' birds here, to see 'em go home to t' Dovecot."

Phoebe ran as if for her life. She loved beast and bird as well as Jack himself, and the fame of Daddy Darwin's doves was great. To see them put up by him to fly home after such an adventure was a sight not lightly to be foregone. The crowd had moved to a hillock in a neighboring field before she touched its outskirts. By that time it pretty well numbered the popula-

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tion of the village, from the oldest inhabitant to the youngest that could run. Phoebe had her mother's courage and resource. Chirping out feebly but clearly, "I'm Maester Shaw's little lass, will ye let me through?" She was passed from hand to hand, till her little fingers found themselves in Jack's tight clasp, and he fairly lifted her to her father's side.

She was just in time. Some of the birds had hung about Jack, nervous, or expecting peas; but the hesitation was past. Free in the sweet sunshine—beating down the evening air with silver wings and their feathers like gold—ignorant of cold eggs and callow young dead in deserted nests—sped on their way by such a roar as rarely shook the village in its body corporate—they flew straight home—to Daddy Darwin's Dovecot.

SCENE IX

DADDY DARWIN lived a good many years after making his will, and the Dovecot prospered in his hands. It would be more just to say that it prospered in the hands of Jack March. By hook and by crook he increased the live stock about the place. Folk were kind to one who had set so excellent an example to other farm lads, though he lacked the primal virtue of belonging to the neighborhood. He bartered pigeons for fowls, and someone gave him a sitting of eggs to "see what he would make of 'em." Master Shaw gave him a little pig, with kind words and good counsel; and Jack cleaned out the disused pigstyes, which were never disused again. He scrubbed his pigs with soap and water as if they had been Christians, and the admirable animals, regardless of the pork they were coming to, did him infinite credit, and brought him profit into the bargain, which he spent on ducks' eggs, and other additions to his farmyard family.

The Shaws were very kind to him; and if Mrs. Shaw's secrets

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must be told, it was because Phœbe was so unchangeably and increasingly kind to him, that she sent the pretty maid (who had a knack of knowing her own mind about things) to service.

Jack March was a handsome, stalwart youth now, of irreproachable conduct, and with qualities which Mrs. Shaw particularly prized; but he was but a farm-lad, and no match for her daughter.

Jack only saw his sweetheart once during several years. She had not been well, and was at home for the benefit of "native air." He walked over the hill with her as they returned from church, and lived on the remembrance of that walk for two or three years more. Phœbe had given him her prayer-book to carry, and he had found a dead flower in it, and had been jealous. She had asked if he knew what it was, and he had replied fiercely that he did not, and was not sure that he cared to know.

"Ye never did know much about flowers," said Phœbe, demurely; "it's red bergamot."

"I love—red bergamot," he whispered penitently. "And thou owes me a bit. I gave thee some once." And Phœbe had let him put the withered bits into his own hymn-book, which was more than he deserved.

Jack was still in the choir, and taught in the Sunday-school where he used to learn. The parson's daughter had had her way; Daddy Darwin grumbled at first, but in the end he got a bottle-green Sunday-coat out of the oak-press that matched the bedstead, and put the house-key into his pocket, and went to church, too. Now, for years past he had not failed to take his place, week by week, in the pew that was traditionally appropriated to the use of the Darwins of Dovecot. In such an hour the sordid cares of the secret panel weighed less heavily on his soul, and the things that are not seen came nearer—the house not made with hands,

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the treasures that rust and moth corrupt not, and which thieves do not break through to steal.

Daddy Darwin died of old age. As his health failed, Jack nursed him with the tenderness of a woman; and kind inquiries, and dainties which Jack could not have cooked, came in from many quarters where it pleased the old man to find that he was held in respect and remembrance.

One afternoon, coming in from the farmyard, Jack found him sitting by the kitchen-table as he had left him, but with a dread look of change upon his face. At first he feared there had been "a stroke," but Daddy Darwin's mind was clear and his voice firmer than usual.

"My lad," he said, "fetch me yon teapot out of the corner cupboard. T' one wi' a pole-house * painted on it, and some letters. Take care how ye shift it. It were t' merry feast-pot † at my christening, and yon 's t' letters of my father's and mother's names. Take off t' lid. There's two bits of paper in the inside."

Jack did as he was bid, and laid the papers (one small and yellow with age, the other bigger, and blue, and neatly written upon) at his master's right hand.

"Read yon," said the old man, pushing the small one towards him. Jack took it up wondering. It was the letter he had written from the workhouse fifteen years before. That was all he could see. The past surged up too thickly before his eyes, and tossing it impetuously from him, he dropped on a chair by the table, and snatching Daddy Darwin's hands he held them to his face with tears.

"God bless thee!" he sobbed. "You've been a good maester to me!"

* A *pole-house* is a small dovecot on the top of a pole.

† "Merry feast-pot" is a name given to old pieces of ware, made in local potteries for local festivals.

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"*Daddy*," wheezed the old man. "*Daddy*, not maester." And drawing his right hand away, he laid it solemnly on the young man's head. "God bless *thee*, and reward thee. What have I done i' my feckless life to deserve a son? But if ever a lad earned a father and a home, thou hast earned 'em, Jack March."

He moved his hand again and laid it trembling on the paper.

"Every word i' this letter ye've made good. Every word, even to t' bit at the end. 'I love them Tumblers as if they were my own,' says you. Lift thee head, lad, and look at me. *They are thy own!* . . . Yon blue paper's my last will and testament, made many a year back by Mr. Brown, of Green Street, Solicitor, and a very nice gentleman, too; and witnessed by his clerks, two decent young chaps, and civil enough, but with too much watch-chain for their situation. Jack March, my son, I have left thee maester of Dovecot and all that I have. And there's a bit of money in t' bed-head that'll help thee to make a fair start, and to bury me decently atop of my father and mother. Ye may let Bill Sexton toll an hour-bell for me, for I'm a old standard, if I never were good for much. Maybe I might ha' done better if things had happed in a different fashion; but the Lord knows all. I'd like a hymn at the grave, Jack, if the Vicar has no objections, and do thou sing if thee can. Don't fret, my son, thou 'st no cause. 'Twas that sweet voice o' thine took me back again to public worship, and it's not t' least of all I owe thee, Jack March. A poor reason, lad, for taking up with a neglected duty—a poor reason—but the Lord is a God of mercy, or there'd be small chance for most of us. If Miss Jenny and her husband come to t' Vicarage this summer, say I left her my duty and an old man's blessing; and if she wants any roots out of t' garden,

give 'em her, and give her yon old chest that stands in the back chamber. It belonged to an uncle of my mother's—a Derbyshire man. They say her husband's a rich gentleman, and treats her very well. I reckon she may have what she's a mind, new and polished, but she's always for old lumber. They're a whimsical lot, gentle and simple. And talking of *women*, Jack, I've a word to say, if I can fetch my breath to say it. Lad! as sure as you're maester of Dovecot, you'll give it a missus. Now take heed to me. If ye fetch any woman home here but Phœbe Shaw, I'll *walk*, and scare ye away from t' old place. I'm willing for Phœbe, and I charge ye to tell the lass so hereafter. And tell her it's not because she's fair—too many on 'em are that; and not because she's thrifty and houseproud—her mother's that, and she's no favorite of mine; but because I've watched her whenever t' ould cat's let her be at home, and it's my belief that she loves ye, knowing naught of *this*" (he laid his hand upon the will), "and that she'll stick to ye, choose what her folk may say. Ay, ay, she's not one of t' sort that quits a falling house—*like rattens*."

Language fails to convey the bitterness which the old man put into these last two words. It exhausted him, and his mind wandered. When he had to some extent recovered himself he spoke again, but very feebly.

"Tak' my duty to the Vicar, lad, Daddy Darwin's duty, and say he's at t' last feather of the shuttle, and would be thankful for the Sacrament."

The Parson had come and gone. Daddy Darwin did not care to lie down, he breathed with difficulty; so Jack made him easy in a big arm-chair, and raked up the fire with cinders, and took a chair on the other side of the hearth to watch with him. The

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old man slept comfortably, and at last, much wearied, the young man dozed also.

He awoke because Daddy Darwin moved, but for a moment he thought he must be dreaming. So erect the old man stood, and with such delight in his wide-open eyes. They were looking over Jack's head.

All that the lad had never seen upon his face seemed to have come back to it—youth, hope, resolution, tenderness. His lips were trembling with the smile of acutest joy.

Suddenly he stretched out his arms, and crying, "Alice!" he started forward and fell—dead—on the breast of his adopted son.

Craw! Craw! Craw! The crows flapped slowly home, and the Gaffers moved off too. The sun was down, and "damps" are bad for "rheumatics."

"It's a strange tale," said Gaffer II, "but if all's true ye tell me, there's not too many like him."

"That's right enough," Gaffer I admitted. "He's been t' same all through, and ye should ha' seen the burying he gave t' ould chap. He was rare and good to him by all accounts, and never gainsaid him ought, except i' not lifting his voice as he should ha' done at t' grave. Jack sings a bass solo as well as any man i' t' place; but he stood yonder, for all t' world like one of them crows, black o' visage, and black wi' funeral clothes, and choked with crying like a child i'stead of a man."

"Well, well, t' ould chap were all he had, I reckon," said Gaffer II.

"*That's* right enough; and for going backwards, as ye may say, and setting a wild graff on an old standard, yon will's done well for DADDY DARWIN'S DOVECOT."

DANDELION CLOCKS

EVERY child knows how to tell the time by a dandelion clock. You blow till the seed is all blown away, and you count each of the puffs—an hour to a puff. Every child knows this, and very few children want to know any more on the subject. It was Peter Paul's peculiarity that he always did want to know more about everything; a habit whose first and foremost inconvenience is that one can so seldom get people to answer one's questions.

Peter Paul and his two sisters were playing in the pastures. Rich, green, Dutch pastures, unbroken by hedge or wall, which stretched—like an emerald ocean—to the horizon and met the sky. The cows stood ankle-deep in it and chewed the cud, the clouds sailed slowly over it to the sea, and on a dry hillock sat Mother, in her broad sun-hat, with one eye to the cows and one to the linen she was bleaching, thinking of her farm.

Peter Paul and his sisters had found another little hillock where, among some tufts of meadow-flowers which the cows had not yet eaten, were dandelion clocks. They divided them quite fairly, and began to tell each other the time of day.

Little Anna blew very hard for her size, and as the wind blew, too, her clock was finished in a couple of puffs. "One, two. It's only two o'clock," she said, with a sigh.

Her elder sister was more careful, but still the wind was against them. "One, two, three. It's three o'clock by me," she said.

Peter Paul turned his back to the wind, and held his clock

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low. "One, two, three, four, five. It's five o'clock by my dandelion—I wonder why the fairy clocks all go differently."

"We blow differently," said his sister.

"Then they don't really tell the time," said Peter Paul.

"Oh, yes, they do—the fairy time." And the little girls got more clocks, and turned their backs to the wind in imitation of Peter Paul, and went on blowing. But the boy went up to his mother.

"Mother, why do dandelion clocks keep different time? It was only two o'clock by Anna's, and three o'clock by Leena's, and five by mine. It can't really be evening with me and only afternoon with Anna. The days don't go quicker with one person than another, do they?"

"Drive Daisy and Buttermilk nearer this way," said his mother; "and if you must ask questions, ask your Uncle Jacob."

There was a reason for sending the boy to Uncle Jacob with his difficulties. He had been born after his father's death, and Uncle Jacob had taken up the paternal duties. It was he who had chosen the child's name. He had called him Peter Paul after Peter Paul Rubens, not that he hoped the boy would become a painter, but he wished him to be called after some great man, and—having just returned from Antwerp—the only great man he could think of was Peter Paul.

"Give a boy a great name," said Uncle Jacob, "and if there's any stuff in him, there's a chance he'll live up to it."

This was a kindly way of putting the proverb about giving a dog a bad name, and Uncle Jacob's strongest quality was kindness—kindness and the cultivation of tulips.

He was sitting in the summer-house smoking, and reading over a bulb-list when Peter Paul found him.

"Uncle Jacob, why do dandelion clocks tell different time to

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different people? Sixty seconds make a minute, sixty minutes make an hour, twenty-four hours make a day, three hundred and sixty-five days make a year. That's right, isn't it? Hours are the same length for everybody, aren't they? But if I got to tea-time when it was only two o'clock with Anna, and went on like that, first the days and then the years would go much quicker with me, and I don't know if I should die sooner,—but it couldn't be, could it?"

"Certainly not," said Uncle Jacob; and he went on with his list. "Yellow Pottelbakker, Yellow Tournesol and Yellow Rose."

"Then the fairy clocks tell lies?" said Peter Paul.

"That you must ask Grandfather Time," replied Uncle Jacob, jocosely. "He is responsible for the clocks and the hour-glasses."

"Where does he live?" asked the boy.

But Uncle Jacob had spread the list on the summer-house table; he was fairly immersed in it and in a cloud of tobacco smoke, and Peter Paul did not like to disturb him.

"Twenty-five Bybloemens, twenty-five Bizards, twenty-five Roses, and a seedling-bed for first bloom this year."

Some of Uncle Jacob's seedling tulips were still "breeders," whose future was yet unmarked * (he did not name them in hope, as he had christened his nephew!) when Peter Paul went to sea.

He was quite unfitted for a farmer. He was always looking forward to what he should do hereafter, or backward to the time when he believed in fairy clocks. Now a farmer should live in the present, and time himself by a steady-going watch with an enameled face. Then little things get done at the right time, which is everything in farming.

* The first bloom of seedling tulips is usually without stripes or markings, and it is often years before they break into stripes; till then they are called breeders, and are not named.

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"Peter Paul puzzles too much," said his mother, "and that is your fault, Jacob, for giving him a great name. But while he's thinking, Daisy misses her mash and the hens lay away. He'll never make a farmer. Indeed, for that matter, men never farm like women, and Leena will take to it after me. She knows all my ways."

They were a kindly family, with no minds to make this short life bitter for each other by thwarting, as so many well-meaning relatives do; so the boy chose his own trade and went to sea.

He saw many places and many people; he saw a great deal of life, and came face to face with death more than once, and under strange shapes. He found answers to a lot of the old questions, and then new ones came in their stead. Each year seemed to hold more than a life-time at home would have held, and yet how quickly the years went by!

A great many had gone by when Peter Paul set foot once more upon Dutch soil.

"And it only seems like yesterday that I went away!" said he.

Mother was dead. That was the one great change. Peter Paul's sisters had inherited the farm. They managed it together, and they had divided their mother's clothes, and also her rings and earrings, her gold skull-cap and head-band and pins,—the heirlooms of a Dutch farmeress.

"It matters very little how we divide them, dear," Anna had said, "for I shall never marry, and they will all go to your girl."

The elder sister was married and had two children. She had grown up very pretty—a fair woman, with liquid misleading eyes. They looked as if they were gazing into the far future, but they did not see an inch beyond the farm. Anna was a very plain copy of her in body, in mind she was the elder sister's echo. They were very fond of each other, and the prettiest thing about them

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was their faithful love for their mother, whose memory was kept as green as pastures after rain.

On Sunday Peter Paul went with them to her grave, and then to service. The ugly little church, the same old clerk, even the look of that part of the seat where Peter Paul had kicked the paint off during sermons—all strengthened the feeling that it could only have been a few days since he was there before.

As they walked home he told his sisters about the various religious services he had seen abroad. They were curious to hear about them, under a sort of protest, for they disapproved of every form of worship but their own.

"The music in some of the cathedrals is very beautiful," said Peter Paul. "And the choristers in their gowns, singing as they come, always affect me. No doubt only some are devout at heart, and others careless—which is also the case with the congregation—but outward reverence is, at the lowest, an acknowledgment of what we owe, and for my part it helps me. Those white figures are not angels I know; but they make one think of them, and I try to be worthier of singing God's praises with them."

There was a little pause, and Leena's beautiful eyes were full of reflections.

Presently she said, "Who washes all the white gowns?"

"I really don't know," said Peter Paul.

"I fancy they don't bleach anywhere as they do in Holland," she continued. "Indeed, Brother, I doubt if Dutchwomen are what they were. No one bleaches as Mother did. Mother bleached beautifully."

"Yes, she bleached beautifully," said Anna.

Peter Paul was only to be three weeks at home before he sailed again; but when ten days were over, he began to think the rest of the time would never come to an end. And this was from

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no want of love for his sisters, or of respect for their friends. One cannot help having an irritable brain, which rides an idea to the moon and home again, without stirrups, whilst some folks are getting the harness of words on to its back. There had been hours in his youth when all the unsolved riddles, the untasted joys, the great possibilities of even a common existence like his, so pressed upon him, that the shortness of the longest life of man seemed the most pitiable thing about it. But when he took tea with Vrow Schmidt and her daughters, and supper-time would not come, Peter Paul thought of the Wandering Jew, and felt very sorry for him.

The sisters would have been glad if Peter Paul would have given up the sea and settled down with them. Leena had a plan of her own for it. She wanted him to marry Vrow Schmidt's niece, who had a farm.

"But I am afraid you do not care for young ladies?" said she.

Peter Paul got red.

"Vrow Schmidt's niece is a very nice young lady," said he.

He was not thinking of Vrow Schmidt's niece, he was thinking of something else—something for which he would have liked a little sympathy; but he doubted whether Leena could give it to him. Indeed, to cure heartache is Godfather Time's business, and even he is not invariably successful. It was probably a sharp twinge that made Peter Paul say, "Have you never wondered that when one's life is so very short, one can manage to get so much pain into it?"

Leena dropped her work and looked up. "You don't say so?" said she. "Dear Brother, is it rheumatism? I'm sure it must be a dreadful risk being out on the masts in the night air, without a roof over your head. But do you wear flannel, Peter

DANDELION CLOCKS

Paul? Mother was very much troubled with rheumatism lately. She thought it was the dews at milking time, and she always wore flannel."

"Yes, dear, Mother always wore flannel," said Anna.

Peter Paul satisfied them on this head. He wore flannel, red flannel, too, which has virtues of its own.

Leena was more anxious than ever that he should marry Vrow Schmidt's niece, and be taken good care of.

But it was not to be: Peter Paul went back to his ship and into the wide world again.

Uncle Jacob would have given him an off-set of his new tulip—a real novelty, and named—if he had had any place to plant it in.

"I've a bed of breeders that will be worth looking at next time you come home," said he.

Leena walked far over the pastures with Peter Paul. She was very fond of him, and she had a woman's perception that they would miss him more than he could miss them.

"I am very sorry you could not settle down with us," she said, and her eyes brimmed over.

Peter Paul kissed the tears tenderly from her cheeks.

"Perhaps I shall when I am older, and have shaken off a few more of my whims into the sea. I'll come back yet, Leena, and live very near to you and grow tulips, and be as good an old bachelor-uncle to your boy as Uncle Jacob was to me."

"And if a foreign wife suits you better than one of the Schmidts," said Leena, re-arranging his bundle for him, "don't think we sha'n't like her. Anyone you love will be welcome to us, Peter Paul—as welcome as you have been."

When they got to the hillock where Mother used to sit, Peter Paul took her once more into his arms.

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"Good-bye, good Sister," he said. "I have been back in my childhood again, and God knows that is both pleasant and good for one."

"And it is funny that you should say so," said Leena, smiling through her tears; "for when we were children you were never happy except in thinking of when you should be a man."

"And there sit your children, just where we used to play," said Peter Paul.

"They are blowing dandelion clocks," said Leena, and she called them.

"Come and bid Uncle Peter good-bye."

He kissed them both.

"Well, what o'clock is it?" said he. The boy gave one mighty puff and dispersed his fairy clock at a breath.

"One o'clock," he cried stoutly.

"One, two, three, four o'clock," said the girl. And they went back to their play.

And Leena stood by them, with Mother's old sun-hat on her young head, and watched Peter Paul's figure over the flat pastures till it was an indistinguishable speck.

He turned back a dozen times to wave his hands to her, and to the children telling the fairy time.

But he did not ask now why dandelion clocks go differently with different people. Godfather Time had told him. He teaches us many things.

OLD FATHER CHRISTMAS

CHAPTER I

"CAN you fancy, young people," said Godfather Garbel, winking with his prominent eyes, and moving his feet backwards and forwards in his square shoes, so that you could hear the squeak-leather half a room off—"can you fancy my having been a very little boy, and having a godmother? But I had, and she sent me presents on my birthdays, too. And young people did not get presents when I was a child as they get them now. We had not half so many toys as you have, but we kept them twice as long. I think we were fonder of them, too, though they were neither so handsome, nor so expensive as these new-fangled affairs you are always breaking about the house.

"You see, middle-class folk were more saving then. My mother turned and dyed her dresses, and when she had done with them, the servant was very glad to have them; but, bless me! your mother's maids dress so much finer than their mistress, I do not think they would say 'thank you' for her best Sunday silk. The bustle's the wrong shape.

"What's that you are laughing at, little miss? It's *pannier*, is it? Well, well, bustle or pannier, call it what you like; but only donkeys wore panniers in my young days, and many's the ride I've had in them.

"Now, as I say, my relations and friends thought twice before they pulled out five shillings in a toy shop, but they didn't forget me, all the same. On my eighth birthday my mother gave

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me a bright blue comforter of her own knitting. My little sister gave me a ball. My mother had cut out the divisions from various bits in the ragbag, and my sister had done some of the sewing. It was stuffed with bran, and had a cork inside which had broken from old age, and would no longer fit the pickle jar it belonged to. This made the ball bound when we played 'prisoner's base.' My father gave me the riding-whip that had lost the lash and the top of the handle, and an old pair of his gloves, to play coachman with; these I had long wished for. Kitty the servant gave me a shell that she had had by her for years. How I had coveted that shell! It had this remarkable property: when you put it to your ear you could hear the roaring of the sea. I had never seen the sea, but Kitty was born in a fisherman's cottage, and many an hour have I sat by the kitchen fire whilst she told me strange stories of the mighty ocean, and ever and anon she would snatch the shell from the mantelpiece and clap it to my ear, crying, 'There, child, you couldn't hear it plainer than that. It's the very moral!'

"When Kitty gave me that shell for my very own I felt that life had little more to offer. I held it to every ear in the house, including the cat's; and, seeing Dick the sexton's son go by with an armful of straw to stuff Guy Fawkes, I ran out, and in my anxiety to make him share the treat, and learn what the sea is like, I clapped the shell to his ear so smartly and unexpectedly, that he, thinking me to have struck him, knocked me down then and there with his bundle of straw. When he understood the rights of the case, he begged my pardon handsomely, and gave me two whole treacle sticks and part of a third out of his breeches' pocket, in return for which I forgave him freely, and promised to let him hear the sea roar on every Saturday half-holiday till further notice.

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"And speaking of Dick and the straw reminds me that my birthday falls on the fifth of November. From this it came about that I always had to bear a good many jokes about being burnt as a Guy Fawkes; but, on the other hand, I was allowed to make a small bonfire of my own, and to have six potatoes to roast therein, and eight-pennyworth of crackers to let off in the evening.

"On this eighth birthday, having got all the above-named gifts, I cried, in the fullness of my heart, 'There never was such a day!' And yet there was more to come, for the evening coach brought me a parcel, and the parcel was my godmother's picture book.

"My godmother was a gentlewoman of small means, but she was accomplished. She could make very spirited sketches, and knew how to color them after they were outlined and shaded in Indian ink. She had a pleasant talent for versifying. She was very industrious. I have it from her own lips that she copied the figures in my picture-book from prints in several different houses at which she visited. They were fancy portraits of characters, most of which were familiar to my mind. There were Guy Fawkes, Punch, his then Majesty the King, Bogy, the Man in the Moon, the Clerk of the Weather Office, a Dunce, and Old Father Christmas. Beneath each sketch was a stanza of my godmother's own composing.

"My godmother was very ingenious. She had been mainly guided in her choice of these characters by the prints she happened to meet with, as she did not trust herself to design a figure. But if she could not get exactly what she wanted, she had a clever knack of tracing an outline of the attitude from some engraving, and altering the figure to suit her purpose in the finished sketch. She was the soul of truthfulness, and the notes she added to the

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index of contents in my picture-book spoke at once for her honesty in avowing obligations, and her ingenuity in availing herself of opportunities. They ran thus:—

No. 1. GUY FAWKES.—Outlined from a figure of a warehouseman rolling a sherry cask into Mr. Rudd's wine vaults. I added the hat, cloak, and boots in the finished drawing.

No. 2. PUNCH.—I sketched him from the life.

No. 3. HIS MOST GRACIOUS MAJESTY THE KING.—On a quart jug bought in Cheapside.

No. 4. BOGY, *with bad boys in the bag on his back*.—Outlined from Christian bending under his burden, in my mother's old copy of the "Pilgrim's Progress." The face from Giant Despair.

No. 5 and No. 6. THE MAN IN THE MOON AND THE CLERK OF THE WEATHER OFFICE.—From a book of caricatures belonging to Dr. James.

No. 7. A DUNCE.—From a steel engraving framed in rosewood that hangs in my Uncle Wilkinson's parlor.

No. 8. OLD FATHER CHRISTMAS.—From a German book at Lady Littleham's.

CHAPTER II

"MY sister Patty was six years old. We loved each other dearly. The picture-book was almost as much hers as mine. We sat so long together on one big footstool by the fire, with our arms round each other, and the book resting on our knees, that Kitty called down blessings on my godmother's head for having sent a volume that kept us both so long out of mischief.

"'If books was allus as useful as that, they'd do for me,' said she; and though this speech did not mean much, it was a great deal for Kitty to say; since, not being herself an educated person, she naturally thought that 'little enough good comes of larning.'

"Patty and I had our favorites amongst the pictures. Bogy, now, was a character one did not care to think about too near bed-time. I was tired of Guy Fawkes, and thought he looked more natural made of straw, as Dick did him. The Dunce was a little too personal; but Old Father Christmas took our hearts



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"THE PICTURE BOOK WAS ALMOST AS MUCH HIS AS MINE."

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by storm; we had never seen anything like him, though now-a-days you may get a plaster figure of him in any toy-shop at Christmas-time, with hair and beard like cotton wool, and a Christmas-tree in his hand.

“The custom of Christmas-trees came from Germany. I can remember when they were first introduced into England, and what wonderful things we thought them. Now, every village school has its tree, and the scholars openly discuss whether the presents have been ‘good,’ or ‘mean’ as compared with other trees in former years. The first one that I ever saw I believed to have come from good Father Christmas himself; but little boys have grown too wise now to be taken in for their own amusement. They are not excited by secret and mysterious preparations in the back drawing-room; they hardly confess to the thrill—which I feel to this day—when the folding-doors are thrown open, and amid the blaze of tapers, mamma, like a Fate, advances with her scissors to give every one what falls to his lot.

“Well, young people, when I was eight years old I had not seen a Christmas-tree, and the first picture of one I ever saw was the picture of that held by Old Father Christmas in my god-mother’s picture-book.

“‘What are those things on the tree?’ I asked.

“‘Candles,’ said my father.

“‘No, Father, not the candles; the other things?’

“‘These are toys, my son.’

“‘Are they ever taken off?’

“‘Yes, they are taken off, and given to the children who stand round the tree.’

“Patty and I grasped each other by the hand, and with one voice murmured, ‘How kind of Old Father Christmas!’

“By-and-by I asked, ‘How old is Father Christmas?’

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"My father laughed, and said, 'One thousand eight hundred and thirty years, child,' which was then the year of our Lord, and thus one thousand eight hundred and thirty years since the first great Christmas Day.

"*'He looks very old,'* whispered Patty.

"And I, who was, for my age, what Kitty called 'Bible-learned,' said thoughtfully, and with some puzzledness of mind, 'Then he's older than Methusaleh.'

"But my father had left the room, and did not hear my difficulty.

"November and December went by, and still the picture-book kept all its charm for Patty and me; and we pondered on and loved Old Father Christmas as children can love and realize a fancy friend. To those who remember the fancies of their childhood I need say no more.

"Christmas week came, Christmas Eve came. My father and mother were mysteriously and unaccountably busy in the parlor (we had only one parlor), and Patty and I were not allowed to go in. We went into the kitchen, but even here was no place of rest for us. Kitty was 'all over the place,' as she phrased it, and cakes, mince-pies, and puddings were with her. As she justly observed, 'There was no place there for children and books to sit with their toes in the fire, when a body wanted to be at the oven all along. The cat was enough for *her* temper,' she added.

"As to puss, who obstinately refused to take a hint which drove her out into the Christmas frost, she returned again and again with soft steps, and a stupidity that was, I think, affected, to the warm hearth, only to fly at intervals, like a football, before Kitty's hasty slipper.

"We had more sense, or less courage. We bowed to Kitty's behests, and went to the back door.

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"Patty and I were hardy children, and accustomed to 'run out' in all weathers, without much extra wrapping up. We put Kitty's shawl over our two heads, and went outside. I rather hoped to see something of Dick, for it was holiday time; but no Dick passed. He was busy helping his father to bore holes in the carved seats of the church, which were to hold sprigs of holly for the morrow—that was the idea of church decoration in my young days. You have improved on your elders there, young people, and I am candid enough to allow it. Still, the sprigs of red and green were better than nothing, and, like your lovely wreaths and pious devices, they made one feel as if the old black wood were bursting into life and leaf again for very Christmas joy; and, if one only knelt carefully, they did not scratch his nose.

"Well, Dick was busy, and not to be seen. We ran across the little yard and looked over the wall at the end to see if we could see anything or anybody. From this point there was a pleasant meadow field sloping prettily away to a little hill about three-quarters of a mile distant; which, catching some fine breezes from the moors beyond, was held to be a place of cure for whooping-cough, or 'kincough,' as it was vulgarly called. Up to the top of this Kitty had dragged me, and carried Patty, when we were recovering from the complaint, as I well remember. It was the only 'change of air' we could afford, and I dare say it did as well as if we had gone into badly-drained lodgings at the seaside.

"This hill was now covered with snow, and stood off against the gray sky. The white fields looked vast and dreary in the dusk. The only gay things to be seen were the berries on the holly hedge, in the little lane—which, running by the end of our back-yard, led up to the Hall—and the fat robin, that was staring

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at me. I was looking at the robin, when Patty, who had been peering out of her corner of Kitty's shawl, gave a great jump that dragged the shawl from our heads, and cried:

“‘LOOK!’

CHAPTER III

“I LOOKED. An old man was coming along the lane. His hair and beard were as white as cotton-wool. He had a face like the sort of apple that keeps well in winter; his coat was old and brown. There was snow about him in patches, and he carried a small fir-tree.

“The same conviction seized upon us both. With one breath we exclaimed, *‘It’s Old Father Christmas!’*

“I know now that it was only an old man of the place, with whom we did not happen to be acquainted, and that he was taking a little fir-tree up to the Hall, to be made into a Christmas tree. He was a very good-humored old fellow, and rather deaf, for which he made up by smiling and nodding his head a good deal, and saying, ‘Aye, aye, *to be sure!*’ at likely intervals.

“As he passed us and met our earnest gaze, he smiled and nodded so affably, that I was bold enough to cry, ‘Good-evening, Father Christmas!’

“‘Same to you!’ said he, in a high-pitched voice.

“‘Then you *are* Father Christmas,’ said Patty.

“‘And a happy New Year,’ was Father Christmas’s reply, which rather put me out. But he smiled in such a satisfactory manner, that Patty went on, ‘You’re very old, aren’t you?’

“‘So I be, miss, so I be,’ said Father Christmas, nodding.

“‘Father says you’re eighteen hundred and thirty years old,’ I muttered.

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“‘Aye, aye, to be sure,’ said Father Christmas, ‘I’m a long age.’

“A *very* long age, thought I, and I added, ‘You’re nearly twice as old as Methuselah, you know,’ thinking that this might not have struck him.

“‘Aye, aye,’ said Father Christmas; but he did not seem to think anything of it. After a pause he held up the tree, and cried, ‘D’ye know what this is, little miss?’

“‘A Christmas tree,’ said Patty.

“And the old man smiled and nodded.

“I leant over the wall, and shouted, ‘But there are no candles.’

“‘By-and-by,’ said Father Christmas, nodding as before. ‘When it’s dark they’ll all be lighted up. That’ll be a fine sight!’

“‘Toys, too, there’ll be, won’t there?’ said Patty.

“Father Christmas nodded his head. ‘And sweeties,’ he added, expressively.

“I could feel Patty trembling, and my own heart beat fast. The thought which agitated us both was this—‘Was Father Christmas bringing the tree to us?’ But very anxiety, and some modesty also, kept us from asking outright.

“Only when the old man shouldered his tree, and prepared to move on, I cried in despair, ‘Oh, are you going?’

“‘I’m coming back by-and-by,’ said he.

“‘How soon?’ cried Patty.

“‘About four o’clock,’ said the old man, smiling, ‘I’m only going up yonder.’

“And, nodding and smiling as he went, he passed away down the lane.

“‘Up yonder.’ This puzzled us. Father Christmas had pointed, but so indefinitely, that he might have been pointing to the sky, or the fields, or the little wood at the end of the Squire’s

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grounds. I thought the latter, and suggested to Patty that perhaps he had some place underground, like Aladdin's cave, where he got the candles, and all the pretty things for the tree. This idea pleased us both, and we amused ourselves by wondering what Old Father Christmas would choose for us from his stores in that wonderful hole where he dressed his Christmas-trees.

"‘I wonder, Patty,’ said I, ‘why there’s no picture of Father Christmas’s dog in the book.’ For at the old man’s heels in the lane there crept a little brown and white spaniel, looking very dirty in the snow.

"‘Perhaps it’s a new dog that he’s got to take care of his cave,’ said Patty.

"‘When we went in-doors we examined the picture afresh by the dim light from the passage window, but there was no dog there.

"‘My father passed us at this moment, and patted my head. ‘Father,’ said I, ‘I don’t know, but I do think Old Father Christmas is going to bring us a Christmas-tree to-night.’

"‘Who’s been telling you that?’ said my father. But he passed on before I could explain that we had seen Father Christmas himself, and had had his word for it that he would return at four o’clock, and that the candles on his tree would be lighted as soon as it was dark.

"‘We hovered on the outskirts of the rooms till four o’clock came. We sat on the stairs and watched the big clock, which I was just learning to read; and Patty made herself giddy with constantly looking up and counting the four strokes, towards which the hour hand slowly moved. We put our noses into the kitchen now and then, to smell the cakes and get warm, and anon we hung about the parlor door, and were most unjustly accused of trying to peep. What did we care what our mother was doing

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in the parlor?—we, who had seen Old Father Christmas himself, and were expecting him back again every moment!

“At last the church clock struck. The sounds boomed heavily through the frost, and Patty thought there were four of them. Then, after due choking and whirring, our own clock struck, and we counted the strokes quite clearly—one! two! three! four! Then we got Kitty’s shawl once more, and stole out into the back-yard. We ran to our old place, and peeped, but could see nothing.

“‘We’d better get up on to the wall,’ I said; and with some difficulty and distress from rubbing her bare knees against the cold stones, and getting the snow up her sleeves, Patty got on to the coping of the little wall. I was just struggling after her, when something warm and something cold coming suddenly against the bare calves of my legs, made me shriek with fright. I came down ‘with a run,’ and bruised my knees, my elbows, and my chin; and the snow that hadn’t gone up Patty’s sleeves went down my neck. Then I found that the cold thing was a dog’s nose and the warm thing was his tongue; and Patty cried from her post of observation, ‘It’s Father Christmas’s dog, and he’s licking your legs.’

“It really was the dirty little brown and white spaniel; and he persisted in licking me, and jumping on me, and making curious little noises, that must have meant something if one had known his language. I was rather harassed at the moment. My legs were sore, I was a little afraid of the dog, and Patty was very much afraid of sitting on the wall without me.

“‘You won’t fall,’ I said to her. ‘Get down, will you?’ I said to the dog.

“‘Humpty Dumpty fell off a wall,’ said Patty.

“‘Bow! wow!’ said the dog.

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"I pulled Patty down, and the dog tried to pull me down; but when my little sister was on her feet, to my relief, he transferred his attentions to her. When he had jumped at her, and licked her several times, he turned round and ran away.

"'He's gone,' said I; 'I'm so glad.'

"But even as I spoke he was back again, crouching at Patty's feet, and glaring at her with eyes the color of his ears.

"Now, Patty was very fond of animals, and when the dog looked at her she looked at the dog, and then she said to me, 'He wants us to go with him.'

"On which (as if he understood our language, though we were ignorant of his) the spaniel sprang away, and went off as hard as he could; and Patty and I went after him, a dim hope crossing my mind—'Perhaps Father Christmas has sent him for us.'

"This idea was rather favored by the fact that the dog led us up the lane. Only a little way; then he stopped by something lying in the ditch—and once more we cried in the same breath, 'It's Old Father Christmas!'

CHAPTER IV

"RETURNING from the Hall, the old man had slipped upon a bit of ice, and lay stunned in the snow.

"Patty began to cry. 'I think he's dead,' she sobbed.

"'He is so very old, I don't wonder,' I murmured; 'but perhaps he's not. I'll fetch father.'

"My father and Kitty were soon on the spot. Kitty was as strong as a man; and they carried Father Christmas between them into the kitchen. There he quickly revived.

"I must do Kitty the justice to say that she did not utter a

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word of complaint at this disturbance of her labors; and that she drew the old man's chair close up to the oven with her own hand. She was so much affected by the behavior of his dog, that she admitted him even to the hearth; on which puss, being acute enough to see how matters stood, lay down with her back so close to the spaniel's that Kitty could not expel one without kicking both.

"For our parts, we felt sadly anxious about the tree; otherwise we could have wished for no better treat than to sit at Kitty's round table taking tea with Father Christmas. Our usual fare of thick bread and treacle was to-night exchanged for a delicious variety of cakes, which were none the worse to us for being 'tasters and wasters'—that is, little bits of dough, or shortbread, put in to try the state of the oven, and certain cakes that had got broken or burnt in the baking.

"Well, there we sat, helping Old Father Christmas to tea and cake, and wondering in our hearts what could have become of the tree. But you see, young people, when I was a child parents were stricter than they are now. Even before Kitty died (and she has been dead many a long year) there was a change, and she said that 'children got to think anything became them.' I think we were taught more honest shame about certain things than I often see in little boys and girls now. We were ashamed of boasting, or being greedy, or selfish; we were ashamed of asking for anything that was not offered to us, and of interrupting grown-up people, or talking about ourselves. Why, papas and mammas now-a-days seem quite proud to let their friends see how bold and greedy and talkative their children can be! A lady said to me the other day, 'You wouldn't believe, Mr. Garbel, how forward dear little Harry is for his age. He has his word in everything, and is not a bit shy; and his papa never

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comes home from town but Harry runs to ask if he's brought him a present. Papa says he'll be the ruin of him!"

"‘Madam,’ said I, ‘even without your word for it, I am quite aware that your child is forward. He is forward and greedy and intrusive, as you justly point out, and I wish you joy of him when those qualities are fully developed. I think his father’s fears are well founded.’

"‘But, bless me! now-a-days, it’s ‘Come and tell Mr. Smith what a fine boy you are, and how many houses you can build with your bricks,’ or, ‘The dear child wants everything he sees,’ or, ‘Little pet never lets mamma alone for a minute; does she, love?’ But in my young days it was, ‘Self-praise is no recommendation’ (as Kitty used to tell me), or, ‘You’re knocking too hard at No. One’ (as my father said when we talked about ourselves), or, ‘Little boys should be seen but not heard’ (as a rule of conduct ‘in company’), or, ‘Don’t ask for what you want, but take what’s given you, and be thankful.’

"And so you see, young people, Patty and I felt a delicacy in asking Old Father Christmas about the tree. It was not till we had had tea three times round, with tasters and wasters to match, that Patty said very gently, ‘It’s quite dark now.’ And then she heaved a deep sigh.

"Burning anxiety overcome me. I leant towards Father Christmas, and shouted—I had found out that it was needful to shout,—

"‘I suppose the candles are on the tree now?’

"‘Just about putting of ‘em on,’ said Father Christmas.

"‘And the presents, too?’ said Patty.

"‘Aye, aye, *to be sure,*’ said Father Christmas, and he smiled delightfully.

"I was thinking what further questions I might venture upon,

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when he pushed his cup towards Patty, saying, 'Since you are so pressing, miss, I'll take another dish.'

"And Kitty, swooping on us from the oven, cried, 'Make yourself at home, sir; there's more where these came from. Make a long arm, Miss Patty, and hand them cakes.'

"So we had to devote ourselves to the duties of the table; and Patty, holding the lid with one hand and pouring with the other, supplied Father Christmas's wants with a heavy heart.

"At last he was satisfied. I said grace, during which he stood, and indeed he stood for some time afterwards with his eyes shut—I fancy under the impression that I was still speaking. He had just said a fervent 'Amen,' and reseated himself, when my father put his head into the kitchen, and made this remarkable statement,—

" 'Old Father Christmas has sent a tree to the young people.'

"Patty and I uttered a cry of delight, and we forthwith danced round the old man, saying, 'Oh, how nice! Oh, how kind of you!' which I think must have bewildered him, but he only smiled and nodded.

" 'Come along,' said my father, 'Come, children. Come, Reuben. Come, Kitty.'

"And he went into the parlor, and we all followed him.

"My godmother's picture of a Christmas-tree was very pretty; and the flames of the candles were so naturally done in red and yellow, that I always wondered that they did not shine at night. But the picture was nothing to the reality. We had been sitting almost in the dark, for, as Kitty said, 'Firelight was quite enough to burn at meal-times.' And when the parlor door was thrown open, and the tree, with lighted tapers on all the branches, burst upon our view, the blaze was dazzling, and threw such a glory round the little gifts, and the bags of colored muslin with acid

drops and pink rose drops and comfits inside, as I shall never forget. We all got something; and Patty and I, at any rate, believed that the things came from the stores of Old Father Christmas. We were not undeceived even by his gratefully accepting a bundle of old clothes which had been hastily put together to form his present.

"We were all very happy; even Kitty, I think, though she kept her sleeves rolled up, and seemed rather to grudge enjoying herself (a weak point in some energetic characters). She went back to her oven before the lights were out and the angel on the top of the tree taken down. She locked up her present (a little work-box) at once. She often showed it off afterwards, but it was kept in the same bit of tissue paper till she died. Our presents certainly did not last so long!

"The old man died about a week afterwards, so we never made his acquaintance as a common personage. When he was buried, his little dog came to us. I suppose he remembered the hospitality he had received. Patty adopted him, and he was very faithful. Puss always looked on him with favor. I hoped during our rambles together in the following summer that he would lead us at last to the cave where Christmas-trees are dressed. But he never did.

"Our parents often spoke of his late master as 'old Reuben,' but children are not easily disabused of a favorite fancy, and in Patty's thoughts and in mine the old man was long gratefully remembered as Old Father Christmas."

THE KYRKEGRIM TURNED PREACHER

A LEGEND

It is said that in Norway every church has its own Niss, or Brownie.

They are of the same race as the Good People, who haunt farmhouses, and do the maids' work for a pot of cream. They are the size of a year-old child, but their faces are the faces of aged men. Their common dress is of gray home-spun, with red peaked caps; but on Michaelmas Day they wear round hats.

The Church Niss is called Kyrkegrim. His duty is to keep the church clean, and to scatter the marsh-marigold flowers on the floor before service. He also keeps order in the congregation, pinches those who fall asleep, cuffs irreverent boys, and hustles mothers with crying children out of church as quickly and decorously as possible.

But his business is not with church-brawlers alone.

When the last snow avalanche has slipped from the high-pitched roof, and the gentian is bluer than the sky, and Baldur's Eyebrow blossoms in the hot spring sun, pious folk are wont to come to church some time before service, and to bring their spades, and rakes, and watering-pots with them, to tend the graves of the dead. The Kyrkegrim sits on the Lych Gate and overlooks them.

At those who do not lay by their tools in good time he throws

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pebbles, crying to each, "*Skynde dig!*" (Make haste!), and so drives them in. And when the bells begin, should any man fail to bow to the church as the custom is, the Kyrkegrim snatches his hat from behind, and he sees it no more.

Nothing displeases the Kyrkegrim more than when people fall asleep during the sermon. This will be seen in the following story.

Once upon a time there was a certain country church, which was served by a very mild and excellent priest, and haunted by a most active Kyrkegrim.

Not a speck of dust was to be seen from the altar to the porch, and the behavior of the congregation was beyond reproach.

But there was one fat farmer who slept during the sermon, and do what the Kyrkegrim would, he could not keep him awake. Again and again did he pinch him, nudge him, or let in a cold draught of wind upon his neck. The fat farmer shook himself, pulled up his neck-kerchief, and dozed off again.

"Doubtless the fault is in my sermons," said the priest, when the Kyrkegrim complained to him. For he was humble-minded.

But the Kyrkegrim knew that this was not the case, for there was no better preacher in all the district.

And yet when he overheard the farmer's sharp-tongued little wife speak of this and that in the discourse, he began to think it might be so. No doubt the preacher spoke somewhat fast or slow, a little too loud or too soft. And he was not "stirring" enough, said the farmer's wife; a failing which no one had ever laid at her door.

"His soul is in my charge," sighed the good priest, "and I cannot even make him hear what I have got to say. A heavy reckoning will be demanded of me!"

"The sermons are in fault, beyond a doubt," the Kyrkegrim

THE KYRKEGRIM TURNED PREACHER

said. "The farmer's wife is quite right. She's a sensible woman, and can use a mop as well as myself."

"Hoot, hoot!" cried the church owl, pushing his head out of the ivy-bush. "And shall she be Kyrkegrim when thou art turned preacher, and the preacher sits on the judgment seat? Not so, little Niss! Dust thou the pulpit, and leave the parson to preach, and let the Maker of souls reckon with them."

"If the preacher cannot keep the people awake, it is time that another took his place," said the Kyrkegrim.

"He is not bound to find ears as well as arguments," retorted the owl, and he drew back into his ivy bush.

But the Kyrkegrim settled his red cap firmly on his head, and betook himself to the priest, whose meekness (as is apt to be the case) encouraged the opposite qualities in those with whom he had to do.

"The farmer must be roused somehow," said he. "It is a disgrace to us all, and what, in all the hundreds of years I have been Kyrkegrim, never befell me before. It will be well if next Sunday you preach a stirring sermon on some very important subject."

So the preacher preached on Sin—fair of flower, and bitter of fruit!—and as he preached his own cheeks grew pale for other men's perils, and the Kyrkegrim trembled as he sat listening in the porch, though he had no soul to lose.

"Was that stirring enough?" he asked, twitching the sleeve of the farmer's wife as she flounced out after service.

"Splendid!" said she, "and must have hit some folk pretty hard, too."

"It kept your husband awake this time, I should think," said the Kyrkegrim.

"Heighy teighy!" cried the farmer's wife. "I'd have you to

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know my good man is as decent a body as any in the parish, if he does take a nap on Sundays! He is no sinner if he is no saint, thank Heaven, and the parson knows better than to preach at him."

"Next Sunday," said the Kyrkegrim to the priest, "preach about something which concerns everyone; respectable people as well as others."

So the preacher preached of Death—whom tears cannot move, nor riches bribe, nor power defy. The uncertain interruption and the only certain end of all life's labors! And as he preached, the women sitting in their seats wept for the dead whose graves they had been tending, and down the aged cheeks of the Kyrkegrim there stole tears of pity for poor men, whose love and labors are cut short so soon.

But the farmer slept as before.

"Do you expect to die?" asked the Kyrkegrim.

"Surely," replied the farmer, "we must all die some day, and one does not need a preacher to tell him that. But it was a funeral sermon, my wife thinks. There has been bereavement in the miller's family."

"Men are a strange race," thought the Kyrkegrim; but he went to the priest and said—"The farmer is not afraid of death. You must find some subject of which men really stand in awe."

So when Sunday came round again, the preacher preached of Judgment—that dread Avenger who dogs the footsteps of trespass, even now! That awful harvest of whirlwind and corruption which they must reap who sow to the wind and to the flesh! Lightly regarded, but biding its time, till a man's forgotten follies find him out at last.

But the farmer slept on. He did not wake when the preacher

THE KYRKEGRIM TURNED PREACHER

spoke of judgment to come, the reckoning that cannot be shunned, the trump of the Archangel and the Day of Doom.

"On Michaelmas Day I shall preach myself," said the Kyrkegrim, "and if I cannot rouse him, I shall give up my charge here."

This troubled the poor priest, for so good a Kyrkegrim was not likely to be found again.

Nevertheless he consented, for he was very meek, and when Michaelmas Day came the Kyrkegrim pulled a preacher's gown over his homespun coat, and laid his round hat on the desk by the iron-clamped Bible, and began his sermon.

"I shall give no text," said he, "but when I have said what seems good to me, it is for those who hear to see if the Scriptures bear me out."

This was an uncommon beginning, and most of the good folk pricked their ears, the farmer among them, for novelty is agreeable in church as elsewhere.

"I speak," said the Kyrkegrim, "of that which is the last result of sin, the worst of deaths, and the beginning of judgment—hardness of heart."

The farmer looked a little uncomfortable, and the Kyrkegrim went bravely on.

"Let us seek examples in Scripture. We will speak of Pharaoh."

But when the Kyrkegrim spoke of Pharaoh the farmer was at ease again. And by-and-by a film stole gently before his eyes, and he nodded in his seat.

This made the Kyrkegrim very angry, for he did not wish to give up his place, and yet a Niss may not break his word.

"Let us look at the punishment of Pharaoh," he cried. But the farmer's eyes were still closed, and the Kyrkegrim became

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agitated, and turned hastily over the leaves of the iron-clamped Bible before him.

"We will speak of the plagues," said he. "The plague of blood, the plague of frogs, the plague of lice, the plague of flies——"

At this moment the farmer snored.

For a brief instant anger and dismay kept the Kyrkegrim silent. Then shutting the iron clamps he pushed the Book on one side, and, scrambling on to a stool, stretched his little body well over the desk, and said, "But these flies were as nothing to the fly that is coming in the turnip-crop!"

The words were hardly out of his mouth when the farmer sat suddenly upright and half rising from his place, cried anxiously, "Eh, what, sir? What does he say, wife? A new fly among the turnips?"

"Ah, soul of clay!" yelled the indignant Kyrkegrim, as he hurled his round hat at the gaping farmer. "Is it indeed for such as thee that Eternal Life is kept in store?"

And drawing the preacher's gown over his head, he left it in the pulpit, and, scrambling down the steps, hastened out of church.

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As he had been successful in rousing the sleepy farmer the Kyrkegrim did not abandon his duties; but it is said that thenceforward he kept to them alone, and left heavier responsibilities in higher hands.

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